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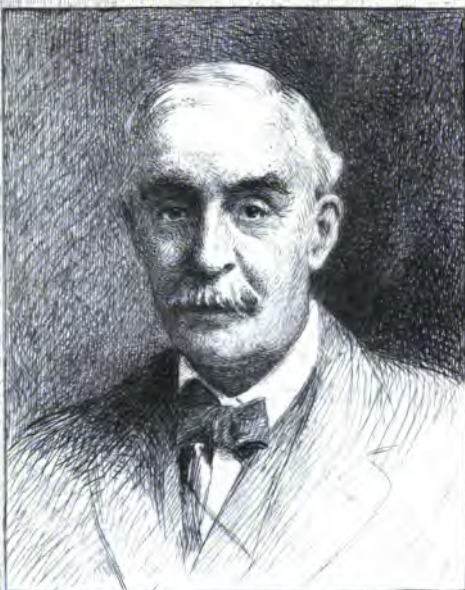
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# ENGLISH SOCIAL REFORMERS

BY  
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## PREFACE.

THE object of these few sketches is to elucidate the chief influences for social and industrial reform that have been active in England in the past, and, in one or two cases, to show their relation to problems of the present. In writing of the men from whom these influences proceeded, I have tried to let them, where possible, speak for themselves. If, therefore, it should seem that too large a portion of the text in certain places is in inverted commas, it is because the present writer recognizes that the words of the reformers he quotes are much better than his own.

I feel also that, in several cases, the sketch I have given of a reformer's life and thought is exceedingly inadequate. In the case of Ruskin it is hopelessly so. Nevertheless, I have tried to point out, without obtrusiveness, one thing throughout this book: that social reform of any kind, to be effective, must proceed from a change in the individual himself as well as a change in his material environment.

H. DE B. G.

*Nottingham,  
March, 1892.*



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# ENGLISH SOCIAL REFORMERS.

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## THE REFORMERS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

### *Introductory.*

THERE have been many sudden changes and revolutions in the development of English social and industrial history ; for although the main current of evolution is generally gradual it is also, at times, accentuated and hastened by sudden rapids and cataracts in its course. History, after all, is occasionally dramatic, and in the acts of the great drama men pass across the stage, who stand out head and shoulders above all their fellow-actors in the permanent influence which they exercise upon the development of their time. Among these great dramas, or revolutions in our history, we have here to deal more especially with some two or three only, which affected our social development. They are the Peasants' Revolt of the fourteenth century, the Social Revolution of the sixteenth, and the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth. In each of these periods we find one or two characters who either voiced audibly the problems and difficulties of their day, or who, not content

## 2 REFORMERS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

with being merely voices, aspired also to solve the questions of which they spoke. The two men whom the troublous times of the fourteenth century thus forced to speak and to act were John Ball, a mad priest, and William Langland, a poverty-stricken poet.

### § 1. *Mediæval England and its troubles.*

But before we see how these two men came to be numbered among the social reformers of our country, we must glance for a moment at the state of England in the first half of the fourteenth century. Almost up to the reign of Edward III. (1327—1377) the course of English history was one of regular and steady development. There had indeed been struggles and racial wars, but since the days of William the Conqueror, Danes, Saxons, and Normans had settled down peaceably together, and considerable progress had been made in our economic life. Towns grew up, and with them grew industry and wealth; merchants and artisans organized themselves in gilds;<sup>1</sup> the sobering influences of the Church and of Parliamentary government were being felt; the growth of the country as a social whole was going on apace.<sup>2</sup> But growth implies change, and the industrial growth of the nation both in agriculture and manufactures was sure to cause a disintegration of the old, essentially local, institutions of former days, and of the intimate relations between men of different classes which the old system produced. The close personal union, for instance,<sup>3</sup> that existed between the lord of the manor and his villein tenants was being rapidly broken up; for the richer tenants

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the author's *Industrial History of England*, pp. 27—29.

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham: *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, p. 334 sq.

<sup>3</sup> *Industrial History of England*, pp. 40, and 68 sq.

began to commute their servile services for money payments, and the poorer to gain their living, not on their own land only, but by working for others as regular wage-paid labourers. But all such processes of disintegration became suddenly accelerated by the dread effects of the Great Plague, the Black Death of 1348 and subsequent years. This awful scourge came upon England just as the people were rejoicing over Edward III.'s victories in the war against France,<sup>1</sup> and most of all over the capture of Calais (1347). It rolled gradually from the East right across Europe, and reached England at the close of 1348. Its ravages were more dreadful than any other plague of mediæval times, in so much that nearly half the population was destroyed. It fell alike upon the dwellers in the towns, with their filthy undrained streets, and upon the labourers working in the open fields amid the fresh air and sunshine. "The fell mortality came upon them, and the sudden and awful cruelty of death winnowed them."<sup>2</sup>

The result was a sudden and complete disorganization of industrial life. The scarcity of men was such that labourers could command high wages, and tenants obtained low rents from landowners, who were anxious that their farms should not lie utterly desolate, and who were compelled to remit the traditional services.<sup>3</sup> It was almost in vain that King and Parliament strove to

<sup>1</sup> Green : *History of English People*, i. 429.

<sup>2</sup> Henry of Knighton's *Chronicle*, 2599.

<sup>3</sup> Those who had tenants "made abatements of the rent in order that the tenants should not go away on account of the want of servants, and the general dearness . . . Likewise, those who received of their tenants daywork throughout the year had to give them more leisure and remit such works, and either entirely to free them or give them an easier tenure at a small rent." Knighton, 2599.



#### 4 REFORMERS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

make the labourers take the same wages as before the Plague, and enacted dire penalties in the *Statute of Labourers* (1350).<sup>1</sup> But still they attempted to do so, and the landowners did their best to help them to tie down the labourers to the soil again.<sup>2</sup> The class of free labourers and tenants, who had commuted their services for money payments, was attacked, and "the ingenuity of the lawyers who were employed as stewards on each manor was exercised in trying to restore to the landowners that customary labour whose loss was now severely felt."<sup>2</sup> Former exemptions and manumissions were often cancelled, and labour services again demanded from the villeins. The result was a gradual union of labourers and tenants of all classes against the landowners, the beginnings of a social strife that corresponds somewhat to the modern state of a "hostile confrontation of labour and capital." Combinations and confederacies of labourers became frequent,<sup>3</sup> and the struggle became more and more bitter.

The social troubles thus caused were in no way diminished by the successes of Edward III. and the Black Prince in France, or even by the conclusion of peace at Bretigny (1360). Indeed, as is obvious to any one who considers how wars are paid for, military success, by the financial burdens which it imposed upon the people, really only made matters worse. Nor had the effects of the Great Plague yet worn themselves out; for there came a second visitation in 1361, and yet a third in July and September, 1369. Each visitation rendered labour scarcer and labourers more bold in their demands; and on each

<sup>1</sup> Cunningham : *English Industry*, p. 306 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Green : *History of English People*, i. 431, 432.

<sup>3</sup> Cunningham : p. 357.

occasion the repressive measures of Parliament and the landowners brought the coming conflict of capital and labour still nearer. Strikes and combinations of workmen became frequent in towns, and there were formidable gatherings of villeins and "fugitive serfs" in the country districts.<sup>1</sup> "The difficulties of the manorial lords would be renewed with every subsequent visitation of the Plague, and the pressure on the villeins to render actual service would become more severe, until at last it resulted in the general outbreak of the peasants in 1381."

The spirit of revolt which is thus evident among the working-classes was encouraged and stimulated, indirectly perhaps, but none the less certainly, by the teaching of Wiclif and his followers, the "poor priests." And, indeed, we may almost reckon Wiclif as one of our social reformers, though his work lay, of course, chiefly on the religious and theological side of the great revolutionary movement of the fourteenth century. The particular doctrine of his which had most influence at this crisis was that which declared that, just as it was lawful to withdraw tithes from priests who lived in sin, so "servants and tenants may withdraw their services and rents from their lords that live openly a cursed life."<sup>2</sup> No doubt the order of wandering friars that Wiclif founded may have gone further in their direct teaching than did their great master; but such doctrine as that quoted must have greatly encouraged those who rebelled against the undue exactions of their lords. These priests spent their lives moving about among the "upland

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Henry of Knighton's *Chronicle* as above; and Cunningham, p. 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Of lords and servants*, in the English works of Wiclif, p. 229, where he defends the poor priests from the charge of having spread such notions.

## 6 REFORMERS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

folk," as the country people were called, wearing only coarse, brown, woollen garments, and won the confidence of the peasants, whom they helped to combine in effective trade unions (see the Statute 1 Rich. II. c. 6). They acted as treasurers for the common funds of these unions, and as messengers between those in different parts of the country, having passwords and secret language of their own.<sup>1</sup> Of their preaching we shall have an example in the sermons of John Ball. Suffice it here to say, that all these influences at work among the "lower classes" of the kingdom could not fail to have a revolutionary effect. And we see the spirit of the time most faithfully reflected in a literary form in the writings of William Langland, the author of *Piers the Plowman*, the poet who was to give expression to the longing of the people for a social reformation.

### § 2. *Langland the Poet.*

William Langland was essentially the poet of the people. He came from their ranks and was one of them, being the son of a freeman named Stacy de Roykaile, a tenant of Lord le Spenser living at Shipton-under-Wychwood in Oxfordshire.<sup>2</sup> He is sometimes called "William W." *i. e.* William of Wychwood, and, again, Robert Langland; but it is now certain that William was his real name. Born in the midst of rural England, about 1332 A.D., he was put to school to be educated, apparently, for the Church; for it appears from the opening lines of his poem<sup>3</sup> that he was attached at one time to the monastery of Great Malvern, and

<sup>1</sup> See John Ball's message to the commons of Essex, quoted in Skeat's preface to *Piers the Plowman*, p. xxvi, and Green's *History*, i. p. 475.

<sup>2</sup> Morley: *First Sketch of English Literature*, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the *Prologus* in Skeat's edition.

he became a *clerk* or scholar, under monastic teaching. When he was thirty years of age, he wrote what is known as the A-text<sup>1</sup> of his poem of *Piers the Plowman*, without any thought of continuing or enlarging it. The Black Death had already made deep impression upon him, for he refers to the pestilences of 1348 and 1361 in his poem.<sup>2</sup> He describes this version as being partly written in May whilst wandering on the Malvern Hills; but probably not long after this he went to London, where he lived in Cornhill, with his wife Kitte and his daughter Calote, for many years. He seems to have had a hard life, for he speaks of himself as earning a scanty living by the performance of minor clerical duties, such as singing the *placebo*, *dirige*, and "the seven psalms," for the good of men's souls, and he often alludes to his extreme poverty. Being married, he was, of course, only in minor orders, and thus could never rise to any rank in the Church. His poverty made him bitter and proud, and he hated, he tells us, to bow to the gay lords and dames who rode, richly dressed in silver and minivere, adown Cheapside.<sup>3</sup> But perhaps it was well for others that he was poor, for his world is the world of the poor; he tells of their life and labours, their toil and hunger, their rude merriment and their helpless despair, till the misery and even the narrow bitterness of their thought is reflected in his verse.

In 1377 he began to expand his poem into the second or B-text. The grief of the nation at the death of the Black Prince, the troublous political events of 1377, and the dissatisfaction of the people with both Edward III. and the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Skeat's Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> *Piers*, 5, 14, "He preued that these pestilences were for pure sin."

<sup>3</sup> *Piers*, Passus xv.

## 8 REFORMERS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

Duke of Lancaster, roused Langland once more to write. Richard II., a mere boy, had just come to the throne, and men felt that he was unable to cope with the troubles of the day. "Woe to the land of which a boy is king," ran an old text from Ecclesiasticus, and Langland appropriated it for his new version. So he re-wrote and added to his poem till he made it three times as long as before, weaving in new thoughts, suggested by the events of the times in which he lived. Once again, probably in 1380, or perhaps later, he revised and added to his poem, completing what is known as the third, or C-text, which contains, in all, a prologue and twenty-two cantos, or *passus*, as Langland calls them. The last trace of the poet himself is a reference, in a later poem, to his being at Bristol in 1399, when he was probably about sixty-seven years of age. Of his personal appearance, all we know is that he was tall enough to be nicknamed "Longe Wille," but this fact, like nearly all others about him, is only drawn from casual references in his own verses. Poor and unknown, he is described by no contemporary writer, he is only a voice calling to us from the darkness of the past, telling us of the misery of the people. Indeed, as has been well said, "every great popular writer is, in a certain sense, a product of his country and his age, a reflection of the intellect, the moral sentiment, and the prevailing social opinions of his time. The author of *Piers the Plowman* no doubt embodied in a poetic dress just what millions felt, and perhaps hundreds had uttered in one fragmentary form or another. The *Vision of Piers the Plowman* thus derives its interest partly from its literary form, partly from the moral and social bearings of its subject—the corruptions of the nobility, and of the several departments of the Government, the vices

of the clergy and the abuses of the Church—in short, from its connexion with the actual life and opinion of its time, into which it gives us a clearer insight than many a laboured history.” Moreover, this expression of what the people felt reacted in a very marked manner upon the people themselves; their thoughts were put into words, and the words urged on thought till it found expression in action. The *Vision* secured “a wide circulation among the commonalty of the realm, and by formulating sentiments almost universally felt, though but dimly apprehended, it brought them into distinct consciousness, and thus prepared the English people for the reception of the seed which the labours of Wyclif and his associates were already sowing among them.”<sup>1</sup>

That Langland's poem really had such an influence is seen from the quotations made by John Ball and from the various imitations of it which other popular writers made, of which *Piers the Plowman's Creed* is the most famous. Yet it cannot be said that Langland either recommended or encouraged revolutionary ideas; perhaps he was even astonished at the use which men like John Ball made of his words. But his out-spoken utterances about those in high places, were easily referred by an oppressed peasantry to certain individual superiors whom they themselves knew; his exaltation of the poor Plowman was eagerly hailed by villeins who were chafing under the yoke of their lords. And thus many passages of his poem came to be uttered in the mouths of the people as watchwords of insurrection.

### § 3. *The Teaching of “Piers the Plowman.”*

Let us now glance at the poem itself and see how certain passages of it could be thus used. I cannot pretend to

<sup>1</sup> Marsh: *Origin and History of the English Language*, p. 296.

give a full outline of it; my reader must try to read it for himself. But we may take a general view of the work as far as it concerns us in dealing with the question of social reform. It opens with a Prologue, in which Langland let his fancy fly far away from the noise of London to the quiet of a May morning on the Malvern Hills. There he falls asleep and dreams. In his dream the world and its people are represented to him by a "field full of folk," all busy in their different spheres. Plowmen and spendthrifts, solitary hermits and busy merchants, jesters and beggars, pilgrims, priests, and friars are there, and among them a king. There too are lawyers and burgesses, tradesmen and labourers, and innkeepers touting for custom—a motley throng, sinful, selfish, and foolish, busy with the cares of this world.

After this Prologue comes the first *passus* or canto of the poem, which, with *passus* ii., iii., and iv., forms an allegory concerning Falsehood, Flattery, and Lady Meed or Bribery, and the marriage of Lady Meed to Falsehood. With these first four *passus* we are not now immediately concerned. The interest of the poem begins for us at *passus* v., in which the dreamer awakes. But he does not awake for long; he soon falls asleep again, and has a second dream, wherein he again sees the field full of folk, and Reason preaching to the people, reminding them, by the way, that the late visitations of the Black Death (1348-49) are judgments of God. Many are affected by the sermon, and make confession of their sins. Of these, the first is Pride, the second Luxury or Lechery, the third Envy, the fourth Wrath, the fifth Avarice, the sixth Gluttony, the seventh Sloth. Robert the Robber also repents, and then all set out to seek after Truth.

It is here that the poem reaches its full significance from

the point of view of social reform, by its elevation of the common labouring man, Piers the Plowman, as the only one who can lead them all and show them the way to Truth. It must have had tremendous influence upon the peasantry who heard the "poor priest" recite this part of the vision, and who felt their class thus idealized and exalted beyond all others. Still more influence had the short digression with which *passus* vi. opens, wherein the seekers after Truth ask for a guide, and Piers says he will show them, when he has ploughed his half-acre. While doing this he gives certain advice to a knight in words which show how people were beginning to regard the land-owners and gentry, not as superiors merely, but as superiors who held their superiority only because they performed certain duties to those below them. This indeed was a new and significant doctrine, when men said openly that property and rank brought with them certain duties which must be fulfilled; a doctrine upon which it would do no harm to insist more distinctly in our own day. Thus Piers speaks, telling lords and ladies to help those who are below them (*pass.* vi. 20):

"And all manner of men that live through meat and drink,  
Help them to work well, that win you your food."

The knight asks him to tell him what to do:

"‘Teach me,’ quoth the knight, ‘and by Christ I will assay.’  
‘By Saint Paul,’ quoth Perkyn<sup>1</sup>, ‘ye proffer you so fair:  
I will swink<sup>2</sup> and sweat and sow for us both,  
And other labours do for you all my life-time,  
In covenant that you keep Holy Church and myself  
From wasters and from wicked men that destroy this world;  
And go and hunt hardily hares and foxes,  
The boars and badgers that break down my hedges,

---

<sup>1</sup> Piers.

<sup>2</sup> Toil.



## 12 REFORMERS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

And go and tame the falcons to kill wild fowls,  
For such come to my croft and crop my wheat.' ”

The knight promises to do all this, and fulfil his duties.

“ ‘Yea, and yet a point,’ quoth Piers, ‘I pray of you more :  
Look that you injure no tenant, but keep truth,  
And though you may amercy<sup>1</sup> him, let mercy be taxer,  
And though poor men proffer you presents and gifts,  
Take them not, lest peradventure you might not deserve it ;  
For you shall yield it again, at the end of years  
In a full perilous place—Purgatory ’tis hight.’ ”

Of course in this passage Langland refers to the frequent exactions, in the shape of fines, that the landowners were now extorting from their villeins if they did not perform enough labour for them. The ravages of the Plague had made labour scarce, and landowners and others were anxious that tenants should perform all their labour-dues and services, even though these had been perhaps commuted. Fines for non-performance were very common, and unjust men would seek to reclaim labour-dues, even though they had been replaced by money-payment. Hence Langland bids them be merciful. Then he proceeds :

“ And ill-treat not your bondmen,<sup>2</sup> that better you may speed.  
Though he be thine underling here, yet it may well happen in  
heaven  
That he shall sit in a worthier place and with more bliss  
Than thou : but do thou better, and live as you should.  
For in charnel at church<sup>3</sup> churls be evil to know,  
Or a knight from a knave there. Know this in thine heart.”

Thus the duties of the upper classes are set plainly before them, and the gospel of equality is openly preached. It is

<sup>1</sup> Fine, amercy.

<sup>2</sup> Villeins.

<sup>3</sup> For in the charnel-house (when dead) it is hard to distinguish a knight from a poor man.

easy to see how, in the embittered state of popular feeling, such telling words would be taken up, and would pass into watchwords among the villeins and labourers. Moreover the gospel of Equality was coupled by Langland with the gospel of Labour. The aim of *Piers the Plowman* is to work, and to make all men work with him. So before starting he makes his will, and sets all who come to him to hard work.

“Now are Perkin and his pilgrims to the plow faring,  
To plow his half-acre many do help him.  
Diggers and delvers digged up the balks,  
Other workmen there were that worked full earnestly,  
Each man in his manner set himself to work,  
And some to please Perkin picked up the weeds.”

But Langland does not only speak plainly to the upper classes: he speaks equally plainly to the labourers, bidding them work hard, and satirizing the idle and “wasters” and wage-earning labourers “that have no land to live on but their hands,” and who yet are only content with the finest fare. He warns the labourer as he had warned the knight. “On the eve of the great struggle between wealth and labour, Langland stands alone in his fairness to both, in his shrewd political and religious common sense.”

After this part of the poem its interest for us grows less. In *passus* vii. Truth sends Piers a bill of pardon for kings, knights, bishops, and the labouring poor, and even for some lawyers and merchants in a less degree. A priest disputes the validity of Piers’ pardon and wants to see it. The dispute between him and Piers is so violent that the dreamer awakes; and the poem of *Piers the Plowman* (properly so called) ends with a fine peroration on the small value of the pope’s pardons, and the superiority of a

righteous life over a mere trust in Indulgences at the Last Great Day. This is the end of the B-text, which was written about 1377, that is only four years before the great Peasant Revolt of 1381.<sup>1</sup>

#### § 4. *The Teaching of John Ball.*

But already the first text of the poem had made its influence felt. It is curious to note how it did so, in those days when printing was not yet invented, and even the art of writing was only the possession of a few. But there can be little doubt that Langland's verses were repeated by many a "poor priest," those followers of Wiclif who went to and fro among the suffering peasantry of England, teaching that all authority was "founded in grace," and sympathizing with the needy and oppressed. It is quite certain that many of the lines of *Piers the Plowman* were sufficiently well known among the common people to be understood as passwords in the messages of John Ball. And it is equally certain that the preaching of John Ball derived a good deal of its inspiration from Langland's poem.

Till the days of the Black Death, the whole mediæval system of social inequality, of lords and serfs, had passed unquestioned, as being the natural and indeed divinely-appointed order of the world. But the social convulsions which that plague brought in its train soon began to shake the foundations of this divine order. The voice of the people was heard in the rude but energetic words of the "proud priest of Kent," who spoke out so boldly in spite of interdict and imprisonment.

John Ball began his preaching about 1360, and continued

<sup>1</sup> Green, i. 442. The reader should refer, if possible in the original, to the whole of *passus* vi. in Skeat's edition of the poem.

it more or less, with intervals of imprisonment, for twenty years. He went about chiefly in Kent, speaking in the open air to audiences of peasants and yeomen in the country churchyards, where the sight of the graves of noble and serf lying side by side gave a terrible point to his teaching of social equality, and to the warning words of Piers the Plowman :—"For in chanel at church churls be ill to know, or a knight from a knave there." And as he preached, men looked around them thoughtfully, seeing that in death and before God all are indeed equal. Thus spoke John Ball, then, to the peasantry :—"Good people, things will never be well in England so long as there be villeins and gentlefolk. By what right<sup>1</sup> are they whom we call lords greater folk than we? On what grounds have they deserved it? Why do they hold us in serfage? If we all came of the same father and mother, of Adam and of Eve, how can they say or prove that they are better than we, if it be not that they make us gain for them by our toil what they spend in their pride? They are clothed in velvet, and warm in their furs and their ermines, while we are covered with rags. They have wine and spices, and fine bread; we have only oat-cake and straw, and water to drink. They have leisure and fine horses; we have pain and labour, the rain and the wind in the fields. And yet it is of us and our toil that these men hold their estate." No wonder that with words like these the hearts of the people were roused, or that they resented the oppression of those who wished to keep them in subjection and not to suffer them to alleviate their lot.

<sup>1</sup> This recalls the teaching of Wiclif, quoted before.

§ 5. *The Lot of the Labourer.*

For there seems to be little doubt that with the renewed exactions of the lords of the manors after the Great Plague, the lot of the labourer bound to the soil was very hard and painful. We have more or less contemporary evidence of it in the poem called *Piers the Plowman's Creed*, which was an imitation of the original, poem of Langland. Its author is not known, but he certainly was a disciple of Wiclif, and lived about the time of the peasants' rising. His work is an additional proof of the extraordinary hold which *Piers the Plowman* had upon the popular imagination. He writes with a thorough sympathy for the hardships of the labourer, and even though it is possible that he may have purposely exaggerated the sufferings of the poor, there can be little doubt, on comparing his verse with Langland's, that his picture is substantially correct. This is his description of the peasant of the fourteenth century:—

“ Then turned I me forth and talked to myself  
 Of the falsehood of this folk, how faithless they were.  
 And as I went my way, weeping for sorrow,  
 I saw a poor man o'er the plough bending.  
 His coat was of a clout that cary was called,  
 His hood was full of holes and his hair sticking out,  
 His shoes were patched and clouted full thick :  
 His toes peeped out as he the ground trod,  
 His hose o'erhung his gaiters on every side,  
 All befouled with mud, as he the plough followed.  
 Two mittens had he, scanty, and made all of rags,  
 And the fingers were worn out and filled full of mud.  
 This wight was bemired in the mud almost to the ankle.  
 Four oxen were before him, that feeble had become,  
 One might reckon each rib, so rueful they were.  
 His wife walked by him with a long goad,  
 In a cutted skirt cutted full high,

Wrapped in a winnowing-sheet to keep her from the weather,  
Barefoot on the bare ice, so that the blood followed.  
And at the field's end lay a little bowl,  
And thereon lay a little child wrapped in rags,  
And twain of two years old upon another side ;  
And all of them sang a song that sorrow was to hear,  
They cried all a cry, a sorrowful note,  
And the poor man sighed sore, and said, ' Children, be still.' "

This gloomy picture of the labouring man was no doubt true in many districts, in spite of the general alleviation of wage-paid labour after the Plague of 1348. But probably the wage-paid labourer who had "no land to live on but his hands" was much better off than the villein here described, who evidently worked his own land, and held it under a lord who could exact labour-services from him in addition. And in the long spell of severe weather in the winter and spring, the lot of these small tenants was often very bitter. Between one harvest and another, both food and work were often scarce enough, as we learn from Langland's pathetic summary of Piers the Plowman's stock of food.

" ' I have not a penny,' quoth Peres, ' pullets for to buy,  
Neither geese nor pigs ; but two green cheeses,  
A few curds and cream, and an oaten cake,  
And two loaves of beans and bran baked for my children.  
And yea, I say by my soul, I have no salt bacon,  
Nor no cooked meat, by Christ, collops for to make.  
But I have parsley and leeks and many cabbage-plants,  
And eke a cow and a calf and a cart mare.  
And by this livelihood we must live till Lammas time,  
And by that I hope to have harvest in my croft.' "

Thus were all the elements of revolt ripening ; poverty and hunger and a feeling of savage wrath against the lords who oppressed the people and heeded not their sufferings.

Meanwhile the state of the kingdom, instead of allaying,

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merely increased the undercurrent of discontent among the lower classes. The Statutes of Labourers, by their endeavours to reduce the rates of wages to the old level of the days before the Plague, or to keep the multitudes of wandering labourers in search of work tied down to their own particular localities, only succeeded in widening the gulf and increasing the bitterness between rich and poor. The Peace of Bretigny, by which Edward III. had gained almost a third of the French kingdom, had covered the King with glory, and stilled for a time the murmur of discontent. But since then many of Edward's conquests had been lost; the Plague had come again (1369) with renewed devastations; the Parliament had unwisely (1376 and 1379) sought to enforce the Statutes of Labourers still more stringently; the King himself was sinking into a premature old age, the victim of his own profligacy and of the designing ministers and avowed mistresses who surrounded him. He had repudiated his debts and ruined thereby the Bardi of Florence, the greatest banking firm of mediæval Europe. His debts and the expenses of his French wars had become a fatal burden upon his own country. His continual levies of tenths and fifteenths upon the produce of the kingdom, especially upon wool, and his taxation of exports and imports, were seriously draining the resources of the nation. To meet the expenditure on war abroad, and on luxury at the court, a poll-tax of a groat a head was ordained among the last acts of the dying King, who passed away at last in June 1377, robbed of his rings even on his death-bed by his mistress, Alice Perrers. Meanwhile the barons, as was commonly the case in mediæval England, were constantly quarrelling among themselves, and maintained small armies of disorderly retainers in livery who must have been a sore

burden upon the tenantry. Richard II., who succeeded to the throne, was a child of only eleven years of age. The war with France was still going on, bringing continual disasters and defeats to the English troops even on our own shores ;<sup>1</sup> and at last, to meet its expenses, Parliament, meeting at Northampton on November 5th, 1380, granted the famous poll-tax which was the immediate cause of the Peasants' Revolt. The tax was now made 12*d.* instead of a groat (4*d.*), and was levied on every person above fifteen years of age. It was in itself most unjust, for it demanded a like sum both from those with large and small means ; for the provision that "the richer should aid the poorer sort" was little regarded. It was collected also in the most odious manner ; for the troops, who had just returned from France after the conclusion of peace in January 1381, were clamorous for pay, and, to meet their demands, the ministers borrowed a large sum from foreign merchants, assigning them this tax in return, and allowing them to appoint their own collectors.

#### § 6. *The Mutterings of a Storm.*

This new oppression brought the discontent of the people to a climax. But this discontent had long been making itself felt, and was only waiting for a definite opportunity to burst forth into flame. As we saw (p. 6), the poorer villeins and labourers had long since banded together in trades-unions of a secret sort, and the "poor priests" of Wiclif, the "begging friars," had long been wandering from village to village, carrying the messages of the angry peasants to

<sup>1</sup> In July and August 1377, the French ravaged the Isle of Wight, and burned Hastings and Rye, and in August 1380, they ravaged the whole of the south coast.



one another, and preaching social reform, if not social equality. Quaint letters in rude rhyme passed through the peasant ranks, and the voice of Piers the Plowman was making itself heard. Here is an epistle from John Ball, the very apostle of social reform, issued from his prison, into which he had been thrown, to the people of Essex: "John the Shepherd, sometime S. Mary's priest of York, and now of Colchester," it ran, "greeteth well John Nameless and John the Miller and John the Carter; and biddeth them beware of guile in the town, and stand together in God's name; and he biddeth Peres the Plowman go to his work, and chastise well Hob the robber; and take with you John True-man and all his fellows and no more; and look sharp and go ahead (loke scharpe you to on heved) and no more:

John the Miller hath ground small, small, small:  
The King's Son of Heaven shall pay for all,  
Beware or ye'll be woe.  
Know your friend from your foe.  
And do well and do better<sup>1</sup> and flee sin,  
Seek ye peace and hold therein.

And so biddeth John True-man<sup>2</sup> and all his fellows."

It will easily be seen that this letter conveys a message clearly intelligible to those for whom it was meant, but of no meaning to others; containing obscure references to Piers the Plowman which the hearers or readers of it would know well how to interpret. Another letter runs:

"John Ball  
Greeteth you all:

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<sup>1</sup> The *Do-well* and *Do-better* are names of characters which appear in the later text of *Piers*.

<sup>2</sup> True-man is a reference to Langland's *Tomme Trew-tonge* (*Piers*, iv. 17).

And doth for to understand  
He hath rung your bell.  
Now right and might !  
Will and skill !  
God speed every dele<sup>1</sup> !”

Such were the hidden messages and passwords that were whispered from one villein to another, or carried by wandering friars, throughout the length and breadth of the land, till at length the storm broke, and all at once in Yorkshire and Lancashire, in Suffolk and Essex, in Kent and in Devon, north, west, east, and south, the peasantry of England rose as one man against their masters.

§ 7. *The Storm breaks out.*

The simultaneous nature of the rising leaves us no doubt that it was preconcerted. The collectors of the poll-tax seem to have been openly opposed first in Essex, and when Sir Thomas Belknap, a judge, was sent to punish the rioters, he was obliged to flee for his life. Almost at the same time a workman, named Wat or Walter the Tyler, killed a collector who, it is said, insulted his daughter.

According to documents in the Public Record Office, “a cry was raised that no tenant should do service or custom to the lords as they had aforetime done,”<sup>2</sup> and immediately bands of town workmen in some cases, and of rustics in others, assembled together under the leadership of men with assumed names, such as Jack the Miller and Jack Straw. In Kent they burst open the gaols, seized William de Septvanz the Sheriff, and compelled him to deliver up the taxation rolls, which were promptly burnt. But these acts were not the immediate object of the social reformers.

<sup>1</sup> Part.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Annals of England*, p. 203.

After releasing John Ball from Maidstone gaol, they proceeded, as all know, to London, demanding not merely the abolition of the unjust poll-tax, but (what is significant as showing the real nature of the rising) also the relief of the rural population from the exactions of their lords. It is significant also to note how many clergy were in the ranks of the insurgents, for in indictments made after the rising<sup>1</sup> we find the chaplain of one church, the sacristan of another, and the clerk of a third, charged with heading mobs that sacked stewards' houses and burnt court-rolls.<sup>2</sup> The mass of peasants and others assembled at Blackheath on June 12th, 1381, entered London the following day, then seized the Tower, and murdered the Archbishop of Canterbury and the King's Treasurer. On the 14th the men of Essex met Richard at Mile End, and on the 15th the men of Kent had a conference with him at Smithfield, when their chief leader, Wat the Tyler, was slain by the Lord Mayor of London.

The details of those meetings are almost too well known to need repetition here. But the demands of the men of Essex prove clearly the real origin of the movement. "We will that you free us for ever, us and our lands," they asked, "and that we be never named or held as villeins."—"I grant it," said the King, with regal diplomacy, and the peasants believed him. He gave the same promise to the men of Kent, and it was only after receiving his letters of emancipation that the reformers returned to their homes, though the rising was not yet entirely at an end, for one party certainly remained in arms up to July 1st.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Annals*, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> These were the records of the manorial courts held by the lords of the manors.

But the peasants learned very soon how vain a thing it was to put their trust in princes. Within a fortnight (on June 30th) Richard issued a proclamation that *all* tenants, whether villeins or free, should render all accustomed services as heretofore ; and on July 2nd he formally annulled the charters of freedom, a step that was subsequently sanctioned by Parliament when it met again on Nov. 5th (5 Richard II. c. 6). Commissions for the trial of offenders were quickly issued (July 10th) ; the judges, supported by strong forces, made circuits, and it would seem that as many as 1,500 persons were executed by their orders.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere the peasants and their leaders were put down by the severest measures. Richard marched through Kent and Essex with an army of 40,000 men, ruthlessly punishing all resistance. "Villeins you were," he cried as the men of Essex claimed from him his own royal promise, "villeins you were and villeins you are. In bondage you shall abide, and that not your old bondage but a worse !" At St. Alban's John Ball was hanged on July 15th, and so too was another leader, one Grind-cobbe as he was called. But as he died Grind-cobbe uttered the words which, in spite of King and lords, at last came true : "If I die I shall die for the cause of the freedom *we have won*, counting myself happy to end my life by such a martyrdom."

### § 8. *How Victory came at last.*

And, as a matter of fact, the peasants in reality gained their point. They had to shed their own blood, but they won in the end. The landowners in Parliament certainly refused any notion of compromise at first ; they even

<sup>1</sup> *Annals*, p. 205 ; Green (i. 485) says that in all 7000 insurgents were executed.

prayed the King to ordain "that no bondman nor bondwoman (*i. e.* no villein) shall place their children at school, as *had been done*, so as to advance their children in the world by their going into the Church."<sup>1</sup> The poor priests, unlicensed preachers, or "Lollards," were ordered to be arrested or held in strong prison "until they justify themselves according to the law and reason of Holy Church" (5 Richard II. st. 2, c. 5). But, after the first year or two, all these efforts fortunately proved abortive. Villeinage rapidly became practically extinct, and commutation of labour-services for money-rents became more and more common. Evidence of this is seen in the whole tone of the writings of Fitzherbert, the author of a well-known work "*On Surveyinge*," who about 1530, instead of regarding the surviving instances of villeinage as quite the natural thing, laments over its continuance as a disgrace to the country—a marvellous change of attitude since the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Almost the last case of survival occurred under Elizabeth, who enfranchised the bondmen on royal estates in 1574, though a few later notices of the custom appear. No doubt some traces of the old order remained for centuries; indeed it would have been strange if such had not been the case. But, speaking broadly, the peasants achieved their object; the labours of John Ball, Tyler, and Grind-cobbe were not altogether futile; and the century that followed the Great Revolt was, on the whole, one of the most prosperous in the history of the English labourer.<sup>3</sup>

Thus we have tried to tell the story of the days of

<sup>1</sup> Green, i. 487. <sup>2</sup> Cf. Cunningham, p. 360, who however thinks villeinage did not die out so quickly.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. my *Industrial History*, p. 79.

Langland and Ball, of *Piers the Plowman* and the poor priests. We have seen that Langland was one of the earliest of our social reformers, stating the problem of the imminent dangers that were arising in the fourteenth century from the antagonism of capital and labour, and trying to point out in his rough verses the way of social peace. At the same time we see the wilder and less balanced spirit of John Ball not satisfied with mere thought and speech, but urging his fellows angrily on to deeds as well. His teaching was wrong and one-sided; yet it contained the elements of social truth; for till the rich recognize that a claim is justly made upon them by the poor, and that property brings with it many duties as well as many privileges, social reform, to say nothing of social harmony, is utterly impossible. John Ball was an enthusiast, violent and mistaken, but yet rousing our sympathy by his evident earnestness and good faith; Langland a dreamer, whose words we read even now with a strange feeling of fellowship and brotherhood amid the difficulties of our own modern days. Both suffered for what they believed, for the former was hanged as a felon, and the latter condemned to a life of bitter poverty and sorrow, and to an obscure and unrecorded death. Yet both hold honoured places among the great names of those who have fought and suffered for the weak and oppressed.

## NOTES ON AUTHORITIES.

1. W. CUNNINGHAM : *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce during the Early and Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press; 1890 edition). Referred to as Cunningham, p. 360, &c., &c. Pages 340 to 365 are especially useful for this section.
2. *The Annals of England, from Contemporary Writers, the Rolls of Parliament, and other Public Records* (Oxford and London, James Parker; library edition, 1876). The reigns of Edward III. and Richard II. are chiefly used here. Referred to as *Annals*, p. 200, &c.
3. J. R. GREEN; *History of the English People*, in four volumes (1877 edition; Macmillan, London). In this section, vol I. book VI. chapter 3, is especially useful. Referred to as Green, i. p. 441, &c.
4. W. W. SKEAT : *Piers the Plowman* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1869), especially the Introduction.
5. J. E. T. ROGERS : *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* (Stereotyped edition : Sonnenschein, London, 1889), especially pp. 251—273.
6. H. DE B. GIBBINS : *The Industrial History of England* (London; Methuen, 1891 edition), especially pp. 67—80.

# SIR THOMAS MORE.





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### § 1. *Social changes since the Peasants' Revolt.*

BARELY a century intervenes between the death of John Ball and William Langland, and the birth of Thomas More ; but it is a century that sees the death of an old order and the birth of a new. The Peasants' Revolt could only have occurred in the Middle Ages, in the state of society peculiar to that time ; but the life of More was passed in an age that saw the breaking up of mediævalism, and the inauguration of what people are pleased to call the modern spirit. The problems which the new age had to face were of course in their essential features the same as occur in all ages ; for they arose from the innate selfishness of man, and from the eternal contrast of rich and poor. But the form in which they appeared was different ; and to understand them aright we must look at the different social and industrial factors that had lately come into operation.

The Peasants' Revolt, as we stated above, succeeded, on the whole, in materially improving the condition of labour. It tended to hasten the abolition of serfdom ; to create a free class of tenants who paid their rents in money, and not in labour, and who found that they thus had to pay a comparatively small and less onerous fixed amount ; and to

produce a class, not only of free tenant-farmers, or yeomen, but of free labourers and artisans who found themselves in a fairly prosperous condition. Indeed the fifteenth century has been called the "Golden Age" of the English labourer, and, without designating it by so optimistic a term as this, we may fairly say that, in spite of many drawbacks, the lot of the working-classes was no harder than, if so hard as, that of their descendants to-day.<sup>1</sup> Food was certainly plentiful and cheap; wages were good; work was generally regular and easy to get; the hours of labour were certainly not excessive. But a new industry was being rapidly introduced into the rural districts that was destined to produce, at any rate upon the agricultural population, the most disastrous effects. This industry was sheep-farming.

The extension of sheep-farming was due to the continuous growth of English manufactures of woollen cloth, more especially since the days of Edward III. In the early Middle Ages the English had been far excelled as cloth manufacturers by the Flemish weavers. Flanders was the great manufacturing district of Europe, and Englishmen, instead of working up their supplies of wool themselves, used to sell it to the Flemish. But gradually manufactures improved in England, and Edward III. gave them a considerable impetus by inviting various Flemings, among them John Kemp,<sup>2</sup> to come and settle in our island in order to encourage and teach English cloth-makers.

The result was that not only were large quantities of wool still exported to Flanders, but continually larger quantities had to be raised for our own home consumption, and thus

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the author's *Industrial History*, pp. 79, 80; but also Cunningham, p. 347-49.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Industrial History*, p. 53, and Cunningham, p. 282.

it became an extremely profitable occupation to grow wool. Moreover sheep-farming is an industry that requires but few labourers, and thus commended itself to those landowners who did not wish to pay more than they could help in wages. Hence, soon after the Plague of 1348 and the Revolt of 1381, we find a tendency among large agriculturists to use more and more of their land as pasture for sheep, and less for arable purposes. Unfortunately, as a consequence of this, the agricultural population, or that part of it which depended on wages, was very much distressed, and actually began to decrease, men being forced to seek employment in the towns to such an extent, that the Government attempted to prevent them from doing so by statutes.<sup>1</sup> The landowners, however, did not trouble themselves about the distress of the rural population; they rather increased it by their policy of turning arable land into pasture, and pulling down all buildings thereon except those necessary for sheep. So at least we gather from the complaints of the tenants of Chesterton, near Cambridge, in 1414: "And also, they saiden, that there was made great waste of housing in the same manor of Chesterton, that is to say of halls and of chambers, and of other houses of office that were necessary in the same manor, and none housing left standing thereonne, but if it were a shepcote or a berne, or a swinesty, and a few houses beside to putte in bestes."<sup>2</sup> Moreover the landowners of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries now wanted more land for their sheep-farms, and consequently began making extensive enclosures "upon other men's commons,"<sup>3</sup> to such an extent that serious

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Acts of 1 and 9, Richard II. (1377 and 1385), 4 Henry VII. (1489), and Cunningham, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Rot. Parl. IV. 606.

<sup>3</sup> Cunningham, p. 474 and p. 399.

risings of the peasantry often occurred, as *e.g.* in Norfolk in 1549, where the insurrection was headed by Ket. But we shall hear more about enclosing from the words of Thomas More himself.

But, besides this, or rather as a consequence of it, the old mediæval manorial system, with all the social environment which it entailed, was rapidly dying out. It depended upon personal relationship between lord and tenant, between master and servant; but now that the villeins had shown, by their revolt, that these services were distasteful to them, and their lords had discovered, in sheep-farming, that such services were no longer so necessary, the system that rested on such a basis was bound to decay. Both parties, almost unconsciously, and by the mere force of circumstances, drifted into the modern relationships of employer and employed, in which the "cash-nexus" is the sole bond of union. Moreover foreign commerce, not only in wool, but in all other commodities, was becoming more and more important and absorbing; the mercantile class and the mercantile spirit were rapidly increasing; industrial competition—a previously unknown factor—was beginning to operate as a new force in economic life. Even in commerce and industry the new life created by the Renaissance was arousing a keener and more eager spirit in all classes of men, and with this fresh life there came also fresh problems.

§ 2. *The Renaissance, and the Discoveries of the East and West.*

For, in considering the influences that affected the views of Thomas More, we must give even a more prominent place to the spirit of the Renaissance than to the industrial and economic questions of his time, important as these

latter were. It is indeed doubtful whether More would have regarded these questions as he did, had it not been for the Renaissance spirit that was in him. It is the Renaissance spirit that gives to his *Utopia* its wide range of speculation, and its equally wide range of human sympathies, its perception of the injustice of social contrasts and of the possibilities of a full, human life from which so many by their poverty and social position are debarred.<sup>1</sup> And consider for a moment how wonderful that sudden awakening of the Renaissance was, how miraculous it must have seemed to the more thoughtful minds of that day. A few years saw the discovery of two new worlds, the Far East and the Far West—the former indeed half known, but practically unapproachable; the latter almost unsuspected. At the same moment the buried treasures of Greek life and thought were brought to Western Europe by fugitives from Constantinople, and the means of rapidly disseminating thoughts of every kind was found in the printing-press.<sup>2</sup> Foreign scholars flocked over to Italy to learn from the Greeks and the Florentines the new language, which was yet so ancient, that opened up a fresh world of thought. Among these scholars, Grocyn, a fellow of New College, Oxford, was perhaps the first Englishman who studied under a Greek exile (one Chancondylas); and the lectures on Greek which he delivered on his return to Oxford in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Utopia*, pp. 99, 100, 163.

<sup>2</sup> The following dates show more clearly than anything else the suddenness of these great discoveries:—Fall of Constantinople and consequent flight of learned Greeks to Italy, and revival of Greek learning in the West, 1453; Caxton the printer settles in England, 1476; Columbus discovers West Indies, 1492; Cabot discovers America, 1497; di Gama discovers sea route to India and Far East, 1498; Colet and Erasmus at Oxford, 1499.

1491, mark a new period in the history of English thought and culture. This revival of letters took, from the first, a special tone in England, a tone more religious than in Italy, and yet more practical, more realistic in its bearing upon political and social questions. The religious side of the Renaissance is seen, perhaps, most strongly in John Colet (1466—1519), Dean of St. Paul's, and the founder of St. Paul's school, who looked upon Greek as "the key by which he could unlock the Gospels and the New Testament," wherein he hoped to "find a new religious standing-ground." The social and economic results of the Renaissance, which here concern us most, are seen in Sir Thomas More, but tinged, nevertheless, in him also with the glow of new religious feeling. The political side is seen in Erasmus, who wrote *The Christian Prince*, and was the Privy Councillor of Prince Charles of the Netherlands, afterwards the Emperor Charles V.; but in Erasmus, as in More, the religious note, first struck by Dean Colet, is ever prominent. These three great men, each reformers in their own way, have become known to us as the "Oxford Reformers," because for some years they lived and worked together at Oxford, More having gone up as an undergraduate in 1497, Erasmus coming from the Netherlands in 1499, and both being friends and pupils of Colet, who was lecturing there.

### § 3. *More's early life.*

Such were the influences and circumstances with which More as a young man was surrounded. But it is now time to learn something of his life and work. He was born in 1478, being thus some twelve years younger than Lily and Colet, and thirty-six younger than Grocyn, the first teacher of Greek in England. Thomas More was the son of Sir

John More, a Knight and Justice of the King's Bench, of whom it is related that he was married three times, in spite of his favourite remark that "marriage was like dipping one's hand into a bag in which there were twenty snakes and one eel, for it was twenty to one that you caught not the eel." The Justice was a Londoner, and dwelt in the heart of the city, and there, too, his son Thomas was born, in Milk Street. The boy was sent to school at St. Anthony's, in Threadneedle Street, which was then supposed to be the best school in London, in the days before Greek was taught even in the Universities.

After leaving school More was placed—as was the custom in those days—in the household of a distinguished man, where he served as a page, this position being intended to give him an insight into the society of men of rank and influence, and, as it were, to complete his education. Whilst in this position, youths used to wear the livery of the person to whose household they were attached, though having it made of more costly materials than the dresses of mere servants, and being attached more closely and personally to their patron. The great man under whose protection young More was placed was Cardinal John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Lord Chancellor, the counsellor and friend of Henry VII., and a person for whom a young man could hardly fail to have immense admiration and respect. More speaks of him in the *Utopia* in a manner which shows us how deeply and sincerely the youth was attached to his patron: "a man not less venerable for his wisdom and virtues than for the high character he bore. He was of middle stature, not broken with age; his looks begat reverence rather than fear; his conversation was easy, but serious and grave; he sometimes took pleasure to try the force of them that came



to him as suitors on business by speaking sharply, though decently, to them, and by that he discovered their spirit and presence of mind, with which he was much delighted (when it did not grow up to impudence), as bearing a great resemblance to his own temper; and he looked on such persons as the fittest men for affairs. He spoke both gracefully and weightily, had a vast understanding, and a prodigious memory. The King depended much on his counsels, and the Government seemed to be chiefly supported by him, and, having passed through many traverses of fortune, he had with great cost acquired a vast stock of wisdom, which is not soon lost when it is purchased so dear.”<sup>1</sup>

In this last sentence, More gives, as it were, a complete summary of the Cardinal's life; for Morton, when More was in his household, was an old man of seventy or eighty years of age, and had had half a century of political experience. Vice-Chancellor of Oxford in 1446, he had distinguished himself, as was then permissible, both in the Law and in the Church, having been Master of the Rolls in 1472, and Bishop of Ely in 1479. Richard III. had imprisoned him in the Tower, but had afterwards released him, and transferred him to the custody of the Duke of Buckingham. But Morton remained a dangerous foe to Richard, and, crossing to Flanders for safety, became actively engaged in the cause of him who afterwards became Henry VII. In return, this king, soon after his accession, made him Lord Chancellor of England and Archbishop of Canterbury (1486), and the distinguished scholar, lawyer, ecclesiastic, and statesman, remained always one of Henry's most trusted advisers. The society of a man like this was in itself a liberal education, and to it More owed much of that keen political

<sup>1</sup> *Utopia*, p. 60.

insight which is so distinct a feature of his writing. That the Cardinal, on his side, very soon perceived, with the intuition of a man of vast experience of men and affairs, the genius of his young retainer, is seen from his remark as he sat at meat one day: "Whoever liveth to try it, shall see this child here waiting at table prove a notable and rare man."

§ 4. *More at Oxford and London.*

In early youth More showed that gay and versatile wit which is so characteristic of his literary style, and which did not desert him even on the scaffold. When, at Christmas time, a Latin play was acted, the boy could step in among the players at will, and extemporize a comic part. Kindly old Dean Colet used to say smiling: "There is but one wit in England, and that is young Thomas More." But more than his wit, his affectionate and gentle nature endeared him alike to his elders and his contemporaries. Writing of him when they had met at Oxford, Erasmus said: "Whenever did Nature mould a character more gentle, endearing, and happy than Thomas More's?"

As he grew up, he was sent at nineteen years of age by his patron Morton to Oxford, where he entered Canterbury College, now a part of Christ Church. There he came under the influence of the great Greek scholars Linacre, Grocyn, and Colet—Colet, of whom Erasmus said: "When I listen to him, it seems to me like listening to Plato himself." And, like Plato, Colet made ardent disciples. Students burdened by scholastic arguments came to him, and were told "to keep to the Bible and the Apostles' Creed, letting divines, if they like, dispute about the rest," and so learned from him that true religion of humanity,

which is love to God and to one's neighbour, and alone can give men a new power and ruling motive in life.<sup>1</sup> Among his most eager disciples were More and Erasmus, the second then only a poor student, longing to learn Greek, but too poor to go as far as Italy for that purpose, yet finding in England what he sought. "I have found in Oxford," he wrote, "so much polish and learning, that now I hardly care about going to Italy at all, save for the sake of having been there." For the Oxford of that day was, as it has often been since, the home of a new Movement—the movement of freedom and reform that was implied in the "new learning." It was in Oxford that More caught the inspiration of the old Greek philosopher and seer, and, impelled by the dream of Plato, felt the thrill of the new hopes and life of an ideal commonwealth.

But More's residence in Oxford did not last long. His friend Erasmus left England for France on his way for Italy, and More returned to London, where "he was then, for the study of the law of the realm, put to an Inn of the Chancery, called New Inn, where for his time he very well prospered."<sup>2</sup> This was in 1499, and the next year his patron Archbishop Morton died. Although no longer having the kindly help and counsel of the great statesman, and having but "a very small allowance," More worked his way steadily up to the bar, going from New Inn to Lincoln's Inn, and became very popular in the city, being made an under-sheriff of London soon after he was "called." At the early age of twenty-one he got into Parliament, and when barely twenty-five openly opposed in the House the proposal of Henry VII. for a subsidy on account of the marriage portion

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Seebohm's *Protestant Revolution*, pp. 74—80.

<sup>2</sup> Roper's *Life*: Lumby's edition, p. 6.

of his daughter Margaret, who was to be married to James IV. of Scotland. It was chiefly owing to his opposition that Parliament refused to grant what the King demanded, and Henry was told, to his wrath and astonishment, that "a beardless boy has disappointed the King's purpose." The result naturally was that the daring young member fell under the King's severe displeasure; his father was fined upon a legal pretext, to show the royal wrath; and Thomas More himself found it best to retire into private life.

Vexed and disappointed at royal injustice, and having always been of a religious disposition, he now had serious thoughts of becoming a monk and going into a cloister. He even tried upon himself for some time the experiment of religious discipline; <sup>1</sup> wore the regulation hair-shirt, took a log for his pillow, and whipped himself as a penance every Friday. But under the wise influence of Colet—now in London, and Dean of St. Paul's—whose religion was of a broader cast than mere monasticism, he decided to marry and wait for better days, while practising quietly at the bar. His wife <sup>2</sup> was the eldest daughter of John Colt, of New Hall, Essex; and it is curious to observe that More would have preferred her younger sister, but married the elder "that he might not subject her to the discredit of being passed over." His London life was brightened by the presence of the old Oxford circle, whom various causes had led back to the capital; and when Erasmus came back to

<sup>1</sup> Roper tells us that "he gave himself to devotion and prayer in the Charterhouse of London, religiously living there without vow about four years, until he resorted to the house of one Mr. Colte, a gentleman of Essex." Lumby's edition, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> This first wife died in 1511 or 1512, and in 1515 More married again, his second wife being Alice Middleton, a widow.

England again in 1505 he found Dean Colet, More, Grocyn, Linacre, and Lily all living in London.

Here then More lived quietly amid that circle of friends who have left so deep an impress upon English life and thought. He was fast becoming a busy and popular lawyer, and had a large and prosperous practice, although he refused (it is said) to plead for cases which he thought unjust, or to take fees from widows, orphans, or poor men. Although not in favour at court, he was a man of many friends and great influence in a quiet way; and when Henry VII. died (1509) he speedily rose into prominence in the court of Henry VIII.

The accession of this young prince seemed, indeed, to the Oxford students like the beginning of a new and happier epoch. He was young, and, like most young princes, popular, and, like most popular people, rich. The condemnation of his father's extortionate favourites, Empson and Dudley, made people hope (as it proved in vain) that no further exactions would be required of them. Having plenty of money left him by his careful, if avaricious, father, he easily obtained a reputation for generosity and open-handedness. He was, moreover, a scholar of some attainments, and, certainly at first, neglected neither study nor the business of Government, in spite of his love of pleasure. In fact, he seemed well fitted to become a great and useful king. As we said, his accession filled the "Oxford students" with the highest hopes, for he was known to be a friend of the "new learning."<sup>1</sup> He made Colet, the Dean of St. Paul's, court-preacher; Thomas More was again made under-sheriff of London (1509), and, a few years later, was drawn even against his will into the court (1518); Erasmus, the friend of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Seebohm: *Protestant Revolution*, pp. 81, 82.

two Oxford men, even though a foreign scholar, was recalled from Rome to England, and made a professor at Cambridge.

Not many years had passed, however, before the hopes of the Oxford reformers began to be deceived. Henry VIII. was eager for military glory, and very soon (1512) involved himself in the Continental war that arose between "the Holy League" (including the Pope, the King of Spain, and the Emperor) and Louis XII. of France.<sup>1</sup> He revived the ancient, but groundless, English claim to the Duchy of Guienne, and invaded the territories of Louis. He did very little good, and spent a great deal of money, and very soon afterwards (1514) changed sides, and helped France to recover from Spain the very provinces he himself had helped the Spanish king to conquer. Now these wars, carried on solely to gratify the personal ambition of those concerned in them, and burdening the people with vast expenses,<sup>2</sup> were very distasteful to the Oxford Reformers, and they used all their influence to stop them. Colet preached against them, Erasmus wrote letters to foreign princes and ecclesiastics against them, More plainly told the King that he was opposed to the conquest of France, and hated war. Nevertheless, it was just at this time that both More and Erasmus were called into the service of princes in active political life, the former to that of Henry VIII., and Erasmus to that of Prince Charles of the Netherlands. And so Thomas More became the servant of Henry, when peace had been made with France, asking only that he should be allowed to "first look to God, and after Him to the King."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Seebohm, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 89, 90.

§ 5. *The 'Christian Prince' of Erasmus, and More's  
'Utopia.'*

And now, at last, we come to the publication of More's great work on social reform. Both he and his friend Erasmus, upon entering royal service, wrote, as it were, a short statement of their views on social and political subjects; one of these was the *Utopia*, the other *The Christian Prince*. Both of them were inspired by the breath of the new learning, the new views of life that are the ideal of modern civilization, that ideal which Mr. Seebohm has so concisely defined as "the art of living together in civil society and of securing the common weal of the people." In this spirit Erasmus in *The Christian Prince* urged that the actions of kings should be guided by the "Golden Rule"—that they should never enter into any war that could possibly be avoided, but that the good of their people should be their sole object, for a king's title to the throne depended upon the people's choice; that kings should aim at taxing their people as little as possible, and that the necessities of life and those in common use among the poorest classes should not be taxed at all, but rather the luxuries of the rich. In fact, the keynote of the whole is, that the object of nations and governments should not be the glory of one or the happiness of a few, but the common weal of the people as a whole.

It is just the same view of life that More urges so strongly in his *Utopia*, which we must now consider in more detail. It was written in the years 1515-16,<sup>1</sup> when Thomas More,

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that the *Utopia* was written in Latin, and first printed, not in England, but at Louvain, late in 1516, under the editorship of Erasmus, Giles, and other of More's Flemish friends. Then it was revised by More, and printed by Frobenius at Basle,

just<sup>1</sup> knighted (1514), was about thirty-seven years of age. In those years More had twice been sent on an embassy with Cuthbert Tunstal to confer with Charles, the Prince of the Netherlands before mentioned, and also Archduke of Austria, soon to be Charles V., the Emperor. He stayed both in Brussels and Antwerp, living in the former town with Erasmus, and in the latter forming a friendship with Peter Giles, secretary to the Antwerp municipality, and "a man of great honour and of a good rank, though less than he deserves; for," says More, "I do not know if there is to be found anywhere a more learned and a better-bred young man," and "not perhaps above one or two that is in all respects so perfect a friend." ¶

"Coming home from Mass one day," he continues, "I saw him (Giles) by accident talking with a stranger, who seemed past the flower of his age; his face was tanned, he had a long beard, and his cloak was hanging carelessly about him, so that by his looks and habit I concluded he was a seaman." This stranger was introduced to him as Raphael Hythloday,<sup>2</sup> a man who was "not ignorant of the Latin tongue, but is eminently learned in the Greek," and who had sailed to the Far West with the great explorer Americus Vesputius or Amerigo Vespucci; and who after a good deal of preliminary discourse gives him a full and detailed account of the land of Utopia.

Now, we can see at the outset from these incidental

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November 1518. Also reprinted in Paris and Vienna. But it did not appear in English till translated by Ralph Robinson in 1551 after More's death. Morley, p. 229.

<sup>1</sup> According to Mark Pattison, *Encycl. Britt.*

<sup>2</sup> From Greek words meaning "knowing in trifles": (ὕθαλος and δῆιος).



allusions how closely the whole scheme of the *Utopia* is identified with the twin discoveries of the New Learning and the New World, and with the inspiration resulting therefrom. Raphael Hythloday, the narrator, the hero, as it were, of More's story, is a disciple of the new learning, a lover of Greek, and thus (it is understood) acquainted with the great Utopia of classical lore, the Republic of Plato. And indeed the Platonic influence is seen in innumerable little touches throughout his tale.<sup>1</sup>

Then, again, see how he is identified with the opening-up of the New World, and all that this then implied, all the hopes and aspirations and enthusiasms which glorify the beginning of the sixteenth century as no other age has since been glorified. They have been disappointed, it is true, and the disappointment has been cruel; but was it not almost worth while for the world to have had them once? But when Raphael sailed away to the west with Vespucci, these hopes were still fresh, and the *Utopia* is instinct with their life and inspiration. It is but the sequel, as it were, to a long series of lesser discoveries. The two Cabots had reached the unknown continent in 1497, on the coast of Labrador; Columbus had reached it in 1498, at Trinidad; Vespucci had made his first expedition there in 1499 and his second in 1500; he had sailed forth twice more (1501 and 1503), in the service of the King of Portugal, to complete his explorations, and had died only a very few years before the *Utopia* was written.

§ 6. *The Introduction to the 'Utopia.'* *State of England.*

And so it was natural that More and Giles, two eager students of the new learning, should willingly talk with

<sup>1</sup> E.g. *Utopia*, pp. 75, 83, 84, 85.

Hythloday the Greek scholar and experienced traveller, and should be eager to learn not only his wondrous tales of far-off lands, but also his views—as a man of the world who had seen much of life—upon the governments of the day. Hence a very important part of More's book is found in the introductory chapters containing an account of the discussion between these three men. Most important of all, for our purpose, are the allusions to the state of England at that time, for these allusions supply us with the necessary picture of social life at that day, and show us how much some of the reforms afterwards explained were needed then. The introduction forms a gloomy commentary upon the ideal state of Utopia. We are introduced in it to Hythloday's experiences on his supposed visit to England in 1496, and to a conversation in which he took part when dining with More's old patron, Cardinal Morton.

Some one at table was praising the strict execution of justice when "thieves were hanged so fast that there were sometimes twenty on one gibbet," whereupon Hythloday remarked that "it were much better to make such good provisions by which every man might be put in a method how to live, and so be preserved from the fatal necessity of stealing." For, he says, the rich were oppressing and starving the poor so that they forced them either to beg or steal. "There is a great number of noblemen among you that are themselves as idle as drones, that subsist on other men's labour, on the labour of their tenants, whom, to raise their revenues, they pare to the quick." Then, too, there was another cause of extreme poverty in England, besides the exactions of noble landowners, and that was their practice of sheep-farming, and the evils resulting from what

was apparently an innocent mercantile pursuit. The desire of gain made them cruel and rapacious.

"There is another cause (of poverty) more peculiar to England," says Hythloday in this conversation.

"What is that?" said the Cardinal.

"The increase of pasture," said I, 'by which your sheep, which are naturally mild and easily kept in order, may be said to devour men, and unpeople not only villages but towns. The nobility and gentry, and even those good men, the abbots, *not contented with the old rents* which their farms yielded, *nor thinking it enough that they, living at their ease, do no good to the public*, resolve to do it hurt instead of good. They stop the course of agriculture, destroying houses and towns, reserving only the churches that they may lodge their sheep in them. For when an insatiable wretch, who is a plague to his country, resolves to inclose many thousands of acres of ground, the owners as well as the tenants are turned out of their possessions by tricks, or by main force, or being wearied out with ill-usage they are forced to sell them. By which means those miserable people (both men and women, married and unmarried, old and young), with their poor but numerous families—since agriculture requires many hands—are all forced to change their seats, not knowing whither to go. And they must sell for almost nothing their household stuff, which could not bring them much money, even though they might stay for a buyer. When that little money is at an end (for it will soon be spent), what is left them to do, but either to steal and so be hanged—God knows how justly!—or to go about and beg? And if they do this they are put in prison as idle vagabonds, while they would willingly work, but can find none that would hire them; for there is no more occasion for

agricultural labour, to which they have been bred, when there is no arable land left.'"<sup>1</sup>

It is worth while, to complete this picture of pauperism, to give one concrete example of what was going on in all parts of the country. The example is the manor of Stretton Baskerville<sup>2</sup> in Warwickshire, belonging to one Twyford. "Thomas Twyford, having begun the depopulation thereof in 4 Henry VII., by decaying four messuages and three cottages whereunto 160 acres of arable land belonged, sold it to Henry Smith, gentleman. Which Henry, following that example, in 9 Henry VIII. enclosed 640 acres of land more, whereby twelve messuages and four cottages fell to ruin; and eighty persons there inhabiting, being employed about tillage and husbandry, were constrained to depart thence and live miserably. By means whereof the church grew to such ruine, that it was of no other use than for the shelter of cattle, being with the churchyard wretchedly profaned, to the evil example of others, as are the words of the Inquisition."

Such were the causes of pauperism upon which Hythloday commented, and to them he adds the growing luxury of the rich. "Luxury likewise breaks in apace upon you to set forward your poverty and misery; for there is excessive vanity in apparel and great cost in diet." But this, he thinks, could be remedied. Stop these enclosures, he says: "restrain those engrossings of the rich; let agriculture be set up again and the manufacture of wool be regulated," and let not "your people be ill-educated and their manners

<sup>1</sup> *Utopia*, pp. 64, 65. Compare with this Cunningham, pp. 434 and 468—481.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, p. 36, quoted in Cunningham, p. 399.

be corrupted from their infancy." But, as he says elsewhere, "to speak plainly my real sentiments, I must freely own that as long as there is any property, and while money is the standard of all other things, I cannot think that a nation can be governed either justly or happily."<sup>1</sup>

§ 7. *The description of Utopia. Agriculture and Trade.*

It is exactly in this communistic spirit that Plato, from whose *Republic* so much of the *Utopia* is drawn, suggests the abolition of private property, and forbids altogether the use of money. But before commenting further upon the spirit of the work, let us glance at the second book, and see how the commonwealth of Utopia was governed. At the very outset we have a description of the country itself, which is divided among fifty-four cities. But city life is not allowed to predominate at the expense of rural life, for every one is trained to know something of agriculture, and thus receives what we are just beginning to see is very needful to-day, a sound agricultural education. This feature was of course introduced by More as a protest against the decay of agriculture in his time, as compared with pastoral industry. He does not, however, dwell long upon this point, but goes on to speak about the towns more particularly—how carefully and beautifully they are laid out: "the streets are twenty feet broad; there lie gardens behind all their houses; and they cultivate their gardens with great care, so that they have both vines, fruits, herbs, and flowers in them; and all is so well ordered and finely kept, that I never saw gardens anywhere that were both so fruitful and so beautiful as theirs. So that he who

<sup>1</sup> *Utopia*, p. 85.

founded their town seems to have taken care of nothing more than of their gardens."

Leaving this delightful *rus in urbe*, Hythloday speaks next about the magistrates—how thirty families choose every year a Syphogrant or Philarch, and over every ten of these is an Archphilarch, while at the head of the State is a Prince, who is prince for life, "unless he is removed upon suspicion of some design to enslave the people."

We hear next about their trades and manner of life, and this constitutes for us an important section, as showing More in the light of a social reformer. First of all industries comes agriculture, "which is so universally understood among them that no person, either man or woman, is ignorant of it; they are instructed in it from their childhood partly by what they learn at school, and partly by practice." More certainly understood a point which is commonly forgotten among modern nations (and especially England) eager to develop manufacturing industries; namely, that a steady home market is more valuable than a foreign one, and that of home markets the steadiest is afforded by a prosperous agricultural class.

But "besides agriculture, which is so common to them all, every man has some peculiar trade to which he applies himself, such as the manufacture of wool or flax, masonry, smith's work, or carpenter's work; for there is no sort of work that is in great esteem among them." And now comes the great social reform that lies at the root of all the other reforms of which the *Utopia* treats—the reform of idleness. Moreover, this reform is particularly interesting to us to-day, because it deals at the same time with the limitation of the hours of labour. "The chief, and almost the only, business of the Syphogrants is to take care that no

man may live idle, but that every one may follow his trade diligently: yet they do not wear themselves out with continued toil from morning to night, as if they were beasts of burden (which as it is indeed a heavy slavery, so it is everywhere the common course of life among all mechanics except the Utopians), but they, dividing the day and night into twenty-four hours, appoint six of these for work, three of which are before dinner and three after. Then they sup, and at eight o'clock, counting from noon, go to bed and sleep eight hours."

### § 8. *The Six-Hours Day.*

Now of course More knew that such a radical reform as a Six-Hours Working Day would meet with violent opposition, not only from those who were interested in maintaining the longest hours for labour, but also from those who honestly believed (as many do to-day) that such a limitation would have disastrous effects upon industry. So he promptly meets all objections. "Now the time appointed for labour is to be narrowly examined; otherwise you may imagine that since there are only six hours appointed for work, they may fall under a scarcity of necessary provisions. But it is so far from being true that this time is not sufficient for supplying them with plenty of all things (either necessary or convenient), that it is rather too much. And this you will easily apprehend if you consider how great a part of all other nations is quite idle. First, women generally do little, who are the half of mankind;<sup>1</sup> and if some few women are diligent their

<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon of female competition in the labour market was unknown in the sixteenth century; and More seems to forget that house-work is an important item.

husbands are idle. Then, consider the great company of idle priests; add to these all rich men, chiefly those that have estates in land, who are called noblemen and gentlemen, together with their families made up of idle persons, that are kept more for show than use.<sup>1</sup> Add to these all those strong and lusty beggars, that go about pretending some disease in excuse for their begging; and upon the whole account, you will find that the number of those, by whose labours mankind is supplied, is much less than you perhaps imagined.”<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact to-day, barely one quarter of the population are engaged in production of any kind, whether of necessities or luxuries.

<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon is not unknown to-day; nor is the next; and we have also 988,718 paupers (in 1890) whose work, such as it is, is by no means profitable.

<sup>2</sup> The following figures are a striking confirmation of More's statement. They are reproduced from an analysis of the census for 1881 (for England and Wales *only*) made by my friend Mr. Thomas Illingworth of Bradford, Yorks, and privately printed by him.

1. <i>Producers</i> , i. e. persons engaged in agriculture, in all kinds of manufacturing industries, in mines, buildings, furniture-making, &c., &c. ... ..	5,838,644
2. <i>Dealers, Exchangers, and Distributors</i> , i. e. all shop-keepers, merchants, dealers in animals, or in drinks, or food, &c., &c. ... ..	1,548,301
3. Persons engaged in <i>conveyance</i> of men, goods, and messages, and in maintenance of roads ... ..	709,615
4. <i>Professional class</i> : clerical, legal, music, miscellaneous; also bankers and accountants ... ..	444,577
5. <i>Government Service</i> , local and national ... ..	229,172
6. <i>Domestic servants</i> , &c., &c. ... ..	1,803,810
7. <i>Indefinite</i> ... ..	613,445
8. <i>Unoccupied or non-productive class</i> —persons returned by property, rank, and not by occupation, young children, and old people over sixty-five years of age ... ..	14,786,875
Total	25,974,439

The ratio of producers is only 1 to 4·44 of the population.



But More would even cut down employment in mere luxuries, for he says immediately: "Then consider how few of those who work are employed in labours of real service; for we who measure all things by money give rise to many trades, that are both vain and superfluous and serve only to support riot and luxury. For if those who work were employed only in such things as the conveniences of life require, there would be such an abundance of them that the prices of them would so sink, that tradesmen could not be maintained by their gains; if all those who labour about useless things were set to more profitable employments, and if all they that languish out their lives in sloth and idleness (every one of whom consumes as much as any two of the men that are at work) were forced to labour, you may easily imagine that a small proportion of time would serve for doing all that is either necessary, profitable, or pleasant to mankind, especially while pleasure is kept within due bounds."

No doubt the advocates of an Eight-Hour Day will eagerly fasten upon these words of More's, and we cannot blame them for so doing. Still more eagerly, no doubt, will they welcome the following argument in favour of the supposition that the working-classes (of to-day) will utilize the leisure time gained by shorter work for self-improvement and general culture: "And sometimes a mechanic, that so employs his leisure hours, as to make a considerable advancement in learning, is eased from being a tradesman and ranked among their learned men. Out of these they choose their ambassadors, their priests, their magistrates, and the Prince himself." Was Thomas More in his witty way casting a prophetic glance into the future, and foretelling the combined effects of the Eight Hours Bill and the University Extension Movement?

Finally, as to that much misused shibboleth, the "dignity of labour." Does More say anything very grand about it? I do not think he does, though he shows a distinct advance upon Plato, in whose eyes work, at any rate manual work, was only despised and disliked. More ennobles manual work, because it is the common duty of all; but he does not talk nonsense about the "dignity" connected therewith, looking upon it rather as a necessary means to a far higher end—the culture of the mind. For "the magistrates never engage the people in unnecessary labour, since the chief end of the constitution is to regulate labour by the necessities of the public, and to allow all the people as much time as is necessary for the improvement of their minds, *in which they think the happiness of life consists.*"

#### § 9. *Over-Population and the Land Question.*

And now we come to two more questions that cannot fail to interest us deeply when we consider their bearing in modern life—the question of over-population and of land. We believe, in regard to the first, that More was the first to recognize that the question is not one of the quantity, but of the locality of population. For it is impossible that *over-population* can occur in the world generally. It never has occurred before, though we have had thousands of years in which to see its effects. What has occurred has been the over-population of a district, and the consequent shifting of centres of population from one country to another, and this has been going on ever since the world began. More was wise enough not to advocate any precautionary measures against mere increase: but points out the simple remedy of transference—not emigration in the modern sense—from one locality to another. "They supply cities that

do not increase so fast, from others that breed faster." It is not till there is a "*general increase over the whole island*" that emigration is resorted to, but "then they draw a number of their citizens out of the several towns and send them over to the neighbouring continent." The modern system of emigration, under which the best and strongest are induced to go away beyond seas, while the weak, unhealthy, and criminal are left behind, would have repelled him at once by its absurdity.<sup>1</sup> Nor does the modern system of landownership find much favour in More's eyes. Speaking of a nation refusing to admit immigrants from Utopia, and the consequent possibility of war arising from such refusal, he remarks: "For they account it a very just cause of war for a nation to hinder others from possessing a part of that soil of which they make no use, but which is suffered to lie idle and uncultivated; since every man has by the law of nature a right to such a waste portion of the earth as is necessary for his subsistence."

Such are the main points that attract our attention on the social side of the *Utopia*. There are, of course, many other points of interest, such as the contempt of gold and jewels, the treatment of slaves, and so forth. There is a suggestive passage about the Utopian moral philosophy which places, "if not the whole, yet the chief part of a man's happiness in pleasure; and, what may seem more strange, they make use of arguments even from religion, for the support of that opinion so indulgent to pleasure." But the word pleasure is used in a high moral and æsthetical sense here, and different sorts of pleasures are expressly distinguished,<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> I cannot help referring the reader, if he does not know the passage already, to the concluding pages of John Law's story of *Captain Lobe* in illustration of this.

<sup>2</sup> *Utopia*, p. 122.

in fact, "this is their notion of pleasure ; they think that no man's reason can carry him to a truer idea of them, unless some discovery from Heaven should inspire him with sublimer notions." The remainder of the book is taken up with an account of their slaves, marriage customs, justice, law, military discipline, and religion, the details of which can best be seen by the reader himself at his leisure. Though these subjects take up a large portion of the latter half of the work, they are hardly for us so profoundly interesting as the concluding passages,<sup>1</sup> in which the accent of the true social reformer rings out clear and unmistakably.

§ 10. *The Injustice of our Society.*

"Thus I have described to you, as particularly as I could, the constitution of that commonwealth, which I do not only think the best in the world, but indeed the only commonwealth that truly deserves the name. In all other places it is evident that, while people talk of a commonwealth, every man only seeks his own wealth ; but there, where no man has any property, all men zealously pursue the good of the public. . . . In other commonwealths every man knows that unless he provides for himself, how flourishing soever the commonwealth may be, he must die of hunger, so that he sees the necessity of preferring his own concerns to the public." And, in truth, does it not seem extraordinary that in a modern state, how flourishing soever it may be in nominal wealth, many men do literally die of hunger or live out a life of miserable half-starvation in the midst of plenty, nay even of "over-production"? But the cause of that again is touched upon immediately by More, in a fine passage upon the unequal distribution of toil and

<sup>1</sup> *Utopia*, p. 162, sqq.

reward, and upon the injustice of the whole received system. "I would gladly hear any man compare the justice that is among the Utopians with that of all other nations, among whom may I perish if I see anything that looks either like justice or equity. For what justice is there in this, that a nobleman, a goldsmith, a banker, or any other man, that either does nothing at all, or at best is employed in things that are of no use to the public, should live in great luxury and splendour upon what is so ill acquired; and a mean man—a carter, a smith, or a ploughman—that works harder even than the beasts themselves, and is employed in labours so necessary that no commonwealth could hold out a year without them, can only earn so poor a livelihood, and must lead so miserable a life that the condition of the beasts is much better than theirs? For as the beasts do not work so constantly, so they feed almost as well and with more pleasure, and have no anxiety about what is to come; while these men are depressed by a barren and fruitless employment, and tormented with the apprehensions of want in their old age; since that which they get by their daily labour does but maintain them at present, and is consumed as fast as it comes in, and there is no overplus left to lay up for old age."

No other words could describe more accurately and sympathetically the lot of the ordinary labouring man of to-day. And yet the labourer of to-day is far better off than his predecessors of fifty years ago, though not better off than those of the last century, while below the ordinary ranks of labour there are the thousands of paupers, of sweaters' victims, of agricultural labourers whose plight is even worse than More depicted. More wrote more than three hundred years ago, and the world of labour has not become much

happier since then. His words are as true to-day as ever, perhaps even truer than when he wrote them. For it is still true that "after the public has reaped all the advantage of their service, and they come to be oppressed with age, sickness, and want, all their labours and the good they have done is forgotten, and all the recompense given them is that they are left to die in great misery." And is it not still true that "the richer sort are often endeavouring to bring the hire of labourers lower"? though it must be said that they do not attempt to do so, as More accused them then, by making laws directly for that purpose.

It may not be true again, as More declares almost passionately, that governments are merely "a conspiracy of the rich," to oppress the poor and get as much work out of them as possible; but it is certain that to-day the poor man has very little voice in the management of affairs, and that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. But More, true social reformer as he was, hardly hoped that things could be otherwise, nor indeed would he have seen any reason to-day to alter the closing words of his essay: "There are many things," he says with a mournful accent, "that I rather wish than expect to see followed in our governments."

#### § II. *More as a Social Reformer.*

These are the last words of the *Utopia*. More was too wise to expect much, if any, result from a merely literary effort like his own; for, being so wise, he knew how little literature influences life. He was a social reformer at heart; but he did not attempt, knowing how hopeless in Henry VIII.'s reign such an attempt would be, to carry out his schemes into practice. All he could do was to

state the problems of his time as he saw them ; and surely that in itself was worth doing.

Merely to have stated and examined the problems was something ; but the author of the *Utopia* went further, and tried to give a solution of them, or, at least, to hold up an ideal to which man might look, and looking, gain fresh hopes. Social injustice, religious intolerance, political tyranny were rampant when he wrote ; but the spirit of the new learning was shedding light upon the dark places of the earth, and, guided by it, Thomas More tried half fancifully, half earnestly, but quite sympathetically, as Plato had done so many centuries before, to put before the world a beautiful dream, yet something which might be more than a dream if man would only have it so.

His *Utopia* has been called (by a socialist), "the first monument of modern Socialism." That is true ; for it has the keynote of the New Era running through it unmistakably. But of course it bears the marks of the period in which it was written. It occupies, as it were, a position intermediate between Plato and St. Simon, sharing the beautiful idealism of the ancient, and indicating the "organized industry" of the modern. "The philosophy of the eighteenth century was revolutionary ; that of the nineteenth must be the work of organization," says St. Simon ; and the organization of society for common social happiness is what the *Utopia* foreshadowed. It is an advance on Plato, because the aristocratic communion of the *Republic* has given way to a commonwealth of equals, a "people's state," in which the government is elective, though social arrangements are still a matter of state regulation. Communism, however, is still there, being in fact a result of the Christian influence so prominent in More's thought in all departments

of life. But it is a Christian Communism, for he agreed with his friend Erasmus, who declared that "the true Christian should regard his property as the common property of all," for "Christian charity knows nothing of private property." We have, in fact, in the *Utopia*, a Christian version of Plato's *Republic*, adapted to the new social order, a version in which the ancient and modern forms of thought are seen to coalesce.

§ 12. *The 'Utopia' and its Author. His rise and fall.*

The publication of the *Utopia* marked out More as one of the foremost leaders of the new learning in Europe. Printed and published, as it was, on the Continent, and being written in Latin, then an almost universal language among the cultured, the book escaped the insularity and insignificance that might have been its fate if it had come out only in England. Even the personality of its author—the friend of Erasmus and other leading scholars of the day, who had frequently crossed the Channel as a political emissary—was fairly familiar to many of his more distinguished readers. And for us there remains Holbein's portrait of him.<sup>1</sup> "The keen, irregular face, the gray restless eye, the thin mobile lips, the tumbled brown hair, the careless gait and dress, as they remain stamped on the canvas of Holbein, picture the inner soul of the man, his vivacity, his restless all-devouring intellect, his keen and ever-restless wit, the kindly half-sad humour that drew its strange veil of laughter and tears over the deep tender reverence of the soul within."

After the publication of the *Utopia*, though not in conse-

<sup>1</sup> Green, II. 97. It is a pity that the description just quoted is spoiled by the double adjectives that precede nearly every noun.



quence of it, More's rise was rapid and successful. He had indeed been knighted in 1514, and sworn a member of the Privy Council. He was, as we saw, repeatedly sent on missions to the Low Countries, and was for some time stationed at Calais as agent for the negotiations carried on by Wolsey with the court of France. In 1519 he had to resign his private practice at the bar for political work, being made Treasurer of the Exchequer in 1521, and Speaker of the Parliament in 1523. But in this Parliament an incident occurred which drew down upon More's head the jealousy of the great Cardinal Wolsey, for owing to More's influence a money grant required by the Cardinal was refused. Nevertheless, More retained the favour of Henry VIII., who, in 1525, made him Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and spared no pains to attach him to the court. But More knew only too well the value of the favour of princes, especially of such a prince as Henry; and, when his son-in-law Roper congratulated him on the King's visits to his house at Chelsea, he remarked merely—"I find his Grace my very good lord indeed; and I believe he doth as regularly favour me as any subject within this realm. Howbeit, son Roper, I may tell thee I have no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head would win him a castle in France, it should not fail to go." Henry VIII., however, seemed bent on favouring him, and when a successor had to be found for Wolsey in 1529, More was made Lord Chancellor. This post he filled with singular rectitude, honesty, and ability, in a time when it was customary for judges to take bribes from suitors, and he held it for four years.

But now came the burning question of Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon in order that he might marry Anne

Boleyn. We need not here go into the details of it; suffice it to say that More found himself at variance with the King, and wisely asked leave to resign the Great Seal. His resignation was accepted on May 10th, 1532. The loss of office, unaccompanied by the promised royal bounty, made More a poor man. Indeed his income did not reach more than £100 a year, and his poverty became so notorious, that the clergy in convocation offered him a present of £3000. But this he peremptorily refused, and contented himself with reducing his establishment and living in a quieter way. Yet his home life remained as happy and as beautiful as ever, even in these comparatively reduced circumstances, and Erasmus has given us a charming picture of his household at Chelsea. "More has built near London, upon the Thames, a modest yet commodious mansion. There he lives surrounded by his numerous family, including his wife, his son, and his son's wife, his three daughters and their husbands, with eleven grandchildren. There is not any man living so affectionate to his grandchildren as he, and he loveth his old wife as if she were a girl of fifteen. Such is the excellence of his disposition that whatsoever happeneth that could not be helped, he is as cheerful and as well pleased as though the best thing possible had been done. In More's house you would say that Plato's Academy was revived again; only, whereas in the Academy the discussions turned upon geometry and the power of numbers, the house at Chelsea is a veritable school of Christian religion. In it is none, man or woman, but readeth or studieth the liberal arts; yet is their chief care of piety. There is never any seen idle; the head of the house governs it, not by a lofty carriage and oft rebukes, but by gentleness and amiable manners.

Every member is busy in his place, performing his duty with alacrity, nor is sober mirth wanting."

§ 13. *The King's Revenge.*

But this quiet and homely life was not to last much longer. More was too great a man to be ignored, and when he dared to refuse the King's direct invitation to be present at the coronation of Anne Boleyn, he was at once marked out for royal vengeance. His enemies were instigated to attack him, and he was even summoned before the Privy Council to answer a charge of taking bribes. Of course this attempted charge failed utterly. Then a bill was brought before Parliament accusing a certain nun, Elizabeth Barton, of seditious language, and implicating More and Fisher as her accomplices. But this second attempt also failed utterly as far as the charge of treason was concerned; and so the question of the King's marriage was brought up once again. But nothing could make More approve of this union, and though the charge was for the time dropped, he knew well that his doom was at hand. "What is postponed is not dropped, Meg," he said sadly in answer to his daughter's congratulations on this second escape from the toils of the law and the King; and his words were soon proved to be only too true. The Act of Supremacy was passed in 1534, and More was sent for to Lambeth to take the oath declaring the King to be head of the Church. He refused, and was thrown into the Tower, where he was kept in close confinement for more than a year. Then he was brought to a mock trial, and by the false witness of Rich, the solicitor-general, was condemned to death. Within a week he was executed, on the 7th of July, 1535, and his head was fixed on London Bridge.

His last moments are thus described by his son-in-law, Roper, in language so chaste and touching that I can do no better than simply reproduce it here.<sup>1</sup>

“And so he was brought by Master Lieutenant out of the Tower, and from thence led towards the place of execution, where, going up the scaffold, which was so weak that it was ready to fall, he said to Master Lieutenant—‘I pray you, I pray you, Master Lieutenant, see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself.’ Then desired he all the people thereabouts to pray for him, and to bear witness with him that he should then suffer death in and for the faith of the Holy Catholic Church. Which done, he kneeled down, and after his prayers said, he turned to the executioner, and with a cheerful countenance spake unto him—‘Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thine office, my neck is very short. Take heed therefore thou strike not awry for saving thine honesty.’ So passed Sir Thomas More out of this world to God, upon the very same day in which himself had most desired. Soon after whose death came intelligence thereof to the Emperor Charles; whereupon he sent for Sir Thomas Eliote, our English ambassador, and said unto him—‘My Lord Ambassador, we understand that the King your master hath put his faithful servant and grave wise counsellor, Sir Thomas More, to death.’ Whereunto Sir Thomas Eliote answered that he understood nothing thereof. ‘Well,’ said the Emperor, ‘it is very true, and this will we say, that if we had been master of such a servant, of whose doings ourselves have had these many years no small experience, we would rather have lost the best city in our dominions than have lost such a worthy counsellor.’”

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, p. 55. Lumby's edition.

## NOTES ON AUTHORITIES.

1. *The Utopia* : the English translation thereof made by Raphe Robinson ; second edition, 1556.
2. *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, written by his son-in-law, William Roper ; Hearne's edition, 1716.  
Both the above are edited, in one volume, by J. Rawson Lumby, D.D. (Cambridge : University Press : 1880), and form the best original account of More's life, and the best version of the *Utopia*. Referred to here as *Lumby's Edition*, p. 32.
3. *Ideal Commonwealths* : containing the *Utopia* and other similar books : edited by Henry Morley, LL.D. (London : Routledge : Morley's Universal Library). The *Utopia* occupies pp. 53—167 in this volume, and as it is so easily accessible the references in my text allude always to this copy, unless otherwise stated. The other books in *Ideal Commonwealths* should be carefully read.
4. *A First Sketch of English Literature* : by Henry Morley (London : Cassell : fifth edition) : especially pp. 222—242, for a general sketch of the literature of the period.
5. *Sir Thomas More* : article by Mark Pattison in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, for a general account of More's life.
6. *The Era of the Protestant Revolution* : by F. Seebohm : especially pp. 74—94 and 167—184, and the same author's *The Oxford Reformers—Colet, Erasmus, and More*, passim.
- 7 and 8. Green's *History* (vol. II.), and Cunningham's *English Industry*, as before, should be read for the general historical and economic events of the period of More's life.

# WESLEY AND WILBERFORCE.

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# WESLEY AND WILBERFORCE.

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## I. JOHN WESLEY.

### § 1. *The Eighteenth Century.*

LITTLE more than a century and a half again intervenes between the death of More and the birth of Wesley, but it was a century that saw the death of mediævalism and the birth of the modern spirit, whether for better or worse. We have seen the first awakening of the modern spirit in the *Utopia*, and we can trace it throughout the great disputes which agitated the seventeenth century. These disputes were not, as in the former two periods of which we have spoken, questions of social or economic so much as of religious and political interest. The attitude of religious freedom of thought and political freedom of action so noticeable in the *Utopia* had developed into the impatience of an Established Church, and the struggle against an absolute monarchy, that occupied the makers of English history in the days of the Stuarts. These struggles had in their natural course divided Englishmen, more or less broadly, into two great parties—the Whigs and the Tories—of whom the first represented the desire for political freedom and government by Parliament, not by a monarch,



while the second recalled the old mediæval belief (however modified it might be) that constitutional and social arrangements are not matters of expediency so much as part of a divinely-constituted order. The Whigs believed in Parliament as representing, not the wisdom of the nation as a whole but the concentrated wisdom of its leaders. They did not perhaps believe so much in the freedom of the citizen to act, speak, and believe as he pleased, as in the expediency of consulting the leaders of the nation in governing the nation, and in the expediency of tolerating modes of thought (as in Nonconformity) to which opposition might be dangerous, or at least unadvisable. The Tories had, during the days of the Civil Wars, upheld stoutly the theory of the divine right of the king to rule, and of a visible adhesion to Christian principles implied in an Established Church. But, unfortunately for their theories, the Stuarts whom they succeeded in restoring showed that the ruler by divine right might be hostile to the national religion, and the Tories had to make their choice. They had to bow to expediency, and renounce their king in the Revolution of 1688. From this renunciation of principles they never really recovered, and it was emphasized still more when in 1714 they had to adopt the Whig principles of expediency once again in accepting a foreign Hanoverian king, who did not even pretend either to care for his new kingdom, or to understand its language and ideas.

Now such an unhappy conflict of ideals as this, a conflict between adherence to a rightful king and a divinely-instituted church, could not fail to have a disastrous effect, not only upon the ideal which had been given up, but upon that which had triumphed. And so it was in this case. For a time the power of high thought and devoted work was lost

among the Tory party; who, after all, represented quite half the nation. No longer being able to follow their political principles, they ceased to care for their religious ideal. Political deadness seemed to cause religious decay; the great questions of the seventeenth century no longer agitated men's thoughts or spurred them to noble actions; the heroic figures of the great struggle between King and People had departed, and nothing seemed left but to acquiesce in the course of history and to let events have their way.

To this state of feeling we may not unnaturally ascribe the lack of elevation, the dullness, coarseness, and brutality that seem to characterize the eighteenth century, in spite of a veneer of literary polish and the glamour of an artificial culture. And the fairly general material prosperity that is characteristic of this century, influenced by no great mental or moral stimulus, served only to accentuate the coarse content and merely sensual happiness of the nation at large. It is not that the eighteenth century was particularly worse than ages before or after it, for all ages are very much the same, and you can always make out a period to be a slough of sin and vice if you only look at certain features of it. It would be perfectly easy, for instance, if we only looked in modern London at the side of life depicted in classical Rome by Juvenal or Petronius Arbiter, to prove that the nineteenth century A.D. was little, if at all, better than the first. There is hardly a vice or crime of Rome that could not easily be paralleled from the records of the law courts, and the appearance of the streets, of our own capital. And the law courts and the streets are only the surface of society; its depths are in all ages remarkably alike. No; it is not that the eighteenth century was extra-

ordinarily brutal or sensual, but that it was so extraordinarily lacking on the moral, religious, and sentimental side of life. To make my meaning clearer, I should perhaps say rather that, whereas to-day we have any amount of sentiment, good and bad, wise and foolish, in daily life, coupled with almost as much vice and folly as in the previous century, in the reign of the first two Georges the vice and folly were unrelieved by any sentiment. As for the force of religion, which really seems to be a factor in modern life, even if it be of a somewhat gushing type, it was practically dead under the early Hanoverians. The royal example was not calculated to revive it, even though the bare form was preserved. It was the custom, certainly, to have prayers said daily in the palace; but they were performed by two parsons in a room next to the Queen's dressing-room while she was at her toilet, the door being open only "enough for those parsons to think we may hear, and shut enough that we may not hear quite so much—those creatures pray so loud we cannot hear one's self speak."<sup>1</sup> As for the kings, George I. and George II. alike, their profligacy was so notorious that they did not care to conceal it. The first had shut up his wife in the lonely Castle of Ahlden on the Lüneburger Haide, thirty miles from Hanover, and lived among his mistresses in uninterrupted pleasures. The second was on good terms with his Queen, but only because she allowed him to detail the beauties of his favourites into her diplomatically unoffended ears, for she cared so little for him herself that even her daughter could remark openly, upon the retirement of Lady Suffolk,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "The Death of Lord Hervey," a dramatic sketch included in Hervey's memoirs, and quoted by Mrs. Oliphant in her *Historical Sketches*, p. 31.

one of the numerous royal flames : "I wish with all my heart that he (the King) would take somebody else, that mamma might be a little relieved from the *ennui* of seeing him always in her room."

### § 2. *Religion and Social Life.*

In religion, the force of Puritanism had long been spent, and no longer had any hold upon the mass of the people. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury said in his charge of 1738 (the year, by the way, when Wesley first began itinerant preaching), "An open and professed disregard to religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, a distinguishing character of the present age. This evil is grown to a great height in the metropolis of the nation ; is daily spread through every part of it ; and, bad in itself as this can be, must of necessity bring all others after it. Indeed it has already brought in such dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the highest part of the world, and such profligate intemperance and fearlessness of committing crimes in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal. And God knows, far from stopping, it receives from the ill design of some persons, and the inconsiderateness of others, a continual increase. Christianity is now ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve, and the teachers of it without any at all." Indeed, "the teachers of it," at any rate the domestic clergy, had sunk extraordinarily low. The chaplain was thought a fit mate for a lady's-maid, ate only at the second table, and was expected to lend a hand to carry his patron to bed at night, after the wine bottles had been emptied, while turning a conveniently deaf ear to the blasphemy and oaths, which flowed

in those days as freely as the wine.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Christianity, in spirit and in deed, was practically ignored, and in his preface to the *Analogy* (1736) Bishop Butler wrote: "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious."

The mass of the people, then, was untouched by religious feeling. That in itself does not mean very much, for we doubt whether the mass of the people to-day is touched by it to any great extent. But in the last century the whole mind of the people was coarse and brutal. Immorality, of course, exists among us to-day, but in that age it existed in a far more open and unblushing form. The profligacy of the King and his Court set an example which the rest of the nation easily followed. The polished Chesterfield writing, strange though it may seem, with real paternal devotion to his son in Paris, gives his eighteen-year-old pupil direct and unhesitating injunctions as to the choice of his mistresses. In fact, he concludes, "the gallantry of high life, though not strictly justifiable, carries at least no external marks of infamy about it; neither the heart nor the constitution is corrupted by it; *and manners possibly are improved.*" This, however, is not remarkable at a time when the King himself was sulking like an extremely ill-bred bear because he had to leave his favourite mistress, Madame von Walmoden (afterwards Countess of Yarmouth), in Hanover, while he returned for the winter to England, or when the Queen was calmly advised by Walpole to supply her royal husband with a fresh mistress, Lady Tankerville, "a safe fool," to balance, during his stay in this country, the attractions of the German concubine.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Oliphant's *Historical Sketches*, and Thackeray's *Esmond*.

Besides gallant profligacy, gambling was then, as now, one of the chief amusements of the higher circles of society. Lecky tells us that "Chief Justice Kenyon in 1796 delivered a charge in which he dwelt upon the scandalous gambling of faro which was carried on at the houses of some ladies in high society. He threatened to send them to the pillory if they were convicted before him. In the following year Lady Buckinghamshire and two other ladies of position were, in fact, condemned, not indeed to the pillory, but to pay £50 each for illegal gambling. It was proved that they had gaming parties by rotation in each other's houses and sat gambling till three or four in the morning."<sup>1</sup> Of course, the nineteenth century is by no means blameless in this respect, but at least the Government does not now, as was the case then, encourage a taste for gambling by multiplying public lotteries. From the same author we catch another glimpse of the fashionable amusements of the day, of which Victor Hugo has given a picturesque account in his novel, *L'homme qui rit*. A club of young men of the upper classes, called "the Mohawks," used to sally forth every night into the streets of London, in order to hunt the passers-by, to torture and to outrage them. "Maid-servants, as they opened their masters' doors, were waylaid, beaten, and their faces cut. Matrons, enclosed in barrels, were rolled down steep and stony inclines. Watchmen were unmercifully beaten, and their noses slit." In fact the outrages upon the female portion of the community committed by the members of the Mohawks and other clubs were such as will not, in the present age, bear description, and we doubt whether the Indian tribe from which this club in especial took its name would have

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *History of England in the 18th Century*, vol. IV.

surpassed them in inflicting wanton indignities. These things went on in the middle of London itself: in the country the roads were equally unsafe owing to the attacks of highwaymen. Horace Walpole, writing in 1751, remarks: "one is forced to travel, even at noon, as if one were going to battle."

Such being the amusements of the upper classes, it can hardly be expected that those of the lower were much better. The habits of gambling and drinking were fast attaining most evil proportions, especially in the case of gin-drinking. In 1684 only 500,000 gallons of gin were distilled. Thirty years later the annual amount, without anything like a proportionate increase of population, had increased to 2,000,000. Twenty years more, and it rose to 5,000,000 gallons; and in 1749 it was calculated that there were 17,000 private gin-shops in London alone. The brutal sports of bull-baiting, bear-baiting, and cock-fighting formed the delight of all classes. In fact, there was all the brutality of the nineteenth century<sup>1</sup>—perhaps more—with none of its redeeming features. Love of art or literature, as such, there was none in the middle and lower classes; morals and religion were almost a dead letter; and, to sum up, there was a general lack of any elevated or noble sentiment.

<sup>1</sup> We must not forget the numerous brutal sports—such as fox-hunting, pigeon-shooting, and prize-fighting—which still flourish among us to-day; nor should we omit the records of the police-courts in cases of wife-beating and cruelty to children and animals,—only a small proportion of which ever become known,—in comparing the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

§ 3. *The Epworth Parsonage.*

This is, at least, the dark side of the eighteenth century, though that it was all as dark as this it would be ridiculous to assert. There must have been more than one parsonage besides Epworth to afford a picture of pure, simple, and God-fearing lives. But Epworth is the one which has been handed down, as it were, as fully and completely as possible, as the example of the home of an eighteenth-century parish priest. So to Epworth we will turn to discover the influences and surroundings among which grew up the great reformer of the eighteenth century. This parish is rather an isolated one, for it is cut off from its proper diocese, that of Lincoln, by the river Trent, and there were few neighbours with whom the Wesleys could associate on terms of social equality. But these circumstances caused the home influences of Epworth Rectory to impress themselves all the more strongly on John Wesley in his earlier years. He was born on June 17th (O. S.) 1703, his father being the rector of the parish, an office he filled from 1696 to 1735. While yet a boy two events occurred, which, it is certain, left a very decided mark upon his subsequent thought. The first was the burning of the Rectory when the boy was six years old (1709), and when he was almost burned to death before he was rescued. It is not unnatural to connect this event with his sincere belief in the reality of hell-fire expressed in his sermons and revivalist addresses, or with his own proposed epitaph on himself as "a Brand plucked from the Burning." The second event of note was the occurrence of mysterious and hitherto unexplained noises of what would be now vulgarly called a "spiritualistic" character in the rector's house in the winter of 1715-16. It is probable that these curious



noises were responsible for much of Wesley's readiness to believe in witchcraft, in the *sortes biblicae*, in possession by evil spirits,<sup>1</sup> and so forth. He quite believed, for instance, that the elements were controlled for the convenience of his work, and that the miracle of the sun in the valley of Ajalon was constantly repeated in a different form for his own benefit. "The wind kept off the rain while I was preaching. As soon as I ended, it began,"<sup>2</sup> he writes, quite believing that the wind and rain were controlled on his behalf, and "incidents of the same kind I have seen abundance of times."

But, besides these purely external events, we must specially notice the influence of his mother, who, more than any one else, is responsible for the development of Methodism; for it was from her teaching that John Wesley gained those ideas of method, of order and careful religious habits, the sense of an over-ruling Providence in human affairs, and of the supreme, all-important influence of religion in daily life, that afterwards so characterized his work. Mrs. Wesley used, for instance, to hold serious weekly conversations with each of her children separately, and these, no doubt, suggested to John the idea of the class-meeting. His views on education, carried afterwards into practice at Kingswood school, were similarly based on his mother's methods of instruction. In fact, in few men has the maternal influence been so strongly and clearly marked in later life as in the case of John Wesley.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his remark upon the case of a woman who was troubled with fits: "The plain case is, she is tormented by an evil spirit; yea, try all your drugs over and over, but at length it will plainly appear: 'This kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting.'" Cf. Canon Overton's *Wesley*, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, June 2, 1758, and cf. Overton's *Wesley*, p. 182.

§ 4. "*A Fellow of Lincoln.*"

As the boy grew older he was sent, early in the year 1714, to school at the Charterhouse, London, then under the head-mastership of Dr. Thomas Walker, while his two brothers were at Westminster school, Samuel as usher, and Charles as a scholar. Here he seems to have made good progress, and then proceeded in 1720 to Christ Church, Oxford, aided by a school exhibition of £40 per annum, then a fairly considerable sum. He was, however, constantly in monetary difficulties at college, probably owing to no fault of his own; yet lived a pleasant undergraduate life, being "gay and sprightly, with a turn for wit and humour."<sup>1</sup> He was ordained deacon in September 1725, by the Bishop of Oxford (his ordination as priest taking place in 1728), and on March 17th, 1726, he was elected, chiefly, though not entirely, by influence, a Fellow of Lincoln College. This event was a source of great pride both to himself and his father, who wrote to him with genuine emotion: "What will be my own fate before the summer is over, God only knows—*sed passi graciosus*. Wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln." And "sometime Fellow of Lincoln" is the designation by which Wesley describes himself in the title-page of all his works.

His life for some years now became that of a conscientious college-tutor, varied by helping his father (1727-29) in his parochial duties at Epworth. And at Oxford, especially in the years 1729 to 1735, begins for us the main interest of his work. For here were the foundations of Methodism first laid, and here did Wesley's work as a social and religious reformer begin. As is well known, John and his

<sup>1</sup> See his contemporary Badcock: cf. Overton's *Wesley*, p. 11.

brother Charles (then a student of Christ Church), together with George Whitefield, then a Pembroke man, and other members of the University, formed themselves into a society, or church-guild as we might call it, for mutual edification, carefully keeping the fasts and festivals of the Church, communicating frequently, giving away all they could in charity, and visiting the sick and poor. They were all staunch High Churchmen. What most concerns us to notice is that they began practical work with the prisoners in Oxford Castle, visiting and comforting them in their confinement, helping the unfortunate debtors locked up in Bocardo, and paying for the education of poor children.<sup>1</sup>

#### § 5. *A Reformer by Accident.*

Now, although I have included John Wesley among our English Social Reformers, it ought to be clearly stated that he was so only by accident, not by design. He was first and foremost a religious reformer, and all his actions sprang from a desire for religious revival rather than for social amelioration. This much is evident from his own testimony as to the origin of the Methodist Movement at Oxford, on laying the foundation of "the new chapel, near the City Road, London," on April 21st, 1777. "In the year 1725 a young student at Oxford was much affected by reading Kempis' *Christian Pattern*, and Bishop Taylor's *Rules of Holy Living and Dying*. He formed an earnest desire to live according to these rules, and to flee from the wrath to come. . . . In the year 1729 he found one that had the same desire." Then others joined them, and the little

<sup>1</sup> These three points are prominent in the social programme of reformers like the Church Army and the Salvationists, and are termed the prison mission, poor man's bank, and free or assisted education.

society thus formed used to sit "two evenings together, and, in a while, six evenings in the week, spending that time in reading the Scriptures, and provoking one another to love and good works. . . . They were all orthodox on every point. . . . They had no conception of anything that would follow. Indeed, they took no thought for the morrow, desiring only to live to-day." These are Wesley's own words, and show quite clearly how he thought. It has been said that the Methodist Movement in its inception, like that of the Salvation Army in its latest state of development, was essentially humanitarian. This is a great mistake. Like Salvationism, Methodism was purely religious in its origin. The social and humanitarian results followed later, not because Wesley's thoughts naturally turned in that direction, but that he considered "good works," such as visiting prisoners, the sick, and the poor, a part of a Christian's duty, just as much as (but probably only as much as) regular communion and frequent prayer.

At the same time, it is well to put the social-reform aspect of Wesley's work prominently forward, because, as a rule, his religious side only has been emphasized. The following "questions," which the Wesleys drew up for the sake of friends and opponents alike, show how much the humanitarian spirit breathed through their religious work :

1. Whether it does not concern all men, of all conditions, to imitate as much as they can Him who went about doing good ?
2. Whether all Christians are not concerned in that command—While we have time, let us do good unto all men ?
3. Whether we shall not be more happy hereafter, the more good we do now ?
4. Whether we can be happy at all hereafter, unless we

have, according to our power, "fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited those that are sick and in prison," and [here speaks the religious, not the social reformer] made all these actions subservient to a higher purpose, even the saving of souls from death?

5. Whether, upon the considerations above mentioned, we may not try to do good to those that are hungry, naked, or sick? In particular, whether, if we know any necessitous family, we may not give them a little food, clothes, or physic, as they want?

6. Whether we may not contribute, what little we are able, towards having their children clothed and taught to read?

7. Whether we may not try to do good to those that are in prison? and in particular whether we may not release such well-disposed persons as remain in prison for small sums?

8. Whether we may not lend smaller sums to those that are of any trade, that they may procure themselves tools and materials to work with?

Such are some of the questions which Wesley found it necessary to draw up, less to encourage his friends than to combat his enemies. For the proceedings of the Methodists,<sup>1</sup> as they were contemptuously called, aroused in that cold and coarse age a spirit of angry remonstrance. Jeers and ridicule were freely bestowed upon them by men who were themselves preparing for ordination. But Wesley and his friends heeded them not. John Wesley himself earnestly took up charitable and private study, devoting much time to the history of the Primitive Church, to which

<sup>1</sup> John Wesley says the name was bestowed in allusion to a set of physicians who flourished at Rome about the reign of Nero. Charles Wesley says it was because of their strict conformity to Church and University rules, and generally methodical mode of life.

it is curious to note how much he owed in his Methodist institutions.<sup>1</sup> He was much impressed also with the writings and occasional society of William Law, the non-juror, and author of the *Serious Call* and *Christian Perfection*. Visits were made to Law at Putney, and he was looked upon by Wesley as "a sort of oracle."

§ 6. *Works, and a new Faith.*

But a total change of life and work was now in store for John Wesley. His father had died in 1735, and when John, on his death, went up to London to present the late Rector of Epworth's volume on Job to the Queen, he met with some of the trustees of the colony of Georgia, who had a little time before (1732) acquired a charter for founding a settlement in North America. The real promoter of the colony was James Edward Oglethorpe, an Oxford man, an M.P., and a general in the army. He was one of the foremost philanthropists of the day, taking special interest in the relief of unfortunate debtors and in prison reform. The new colonists were, in fact, to be composed largely of unfortunate debtors, who would thus have a fresh chance in life. Wesley was introduced to General Oglethorpe as a most suitable man to accompany the emigrants and to preach the Gospel to the settlers and to the Indians in and near Georgia. Wesley himself seems to have been fired with missionary enthusiasm chiefly for the Indians, not for the settlers, and finally accompanied the party as a missionary sent out by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, with a stipend of £50 a year. The vessel reached Georgia on February 5th, 1736.

As all know, the visit to Georgia was not the most

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Canon Overton's *Wesley*, pp. 30, 33, and 121-135.

successful incident in Wesley's career. He did not preach the gospel to the Indians, for he found enough work to do among the settlers. His work was not a failure, though it seemed so to himself, but on the other hand it was not a success. The Georgia episode in his history is remarkable chiefly for its bringing him into contact with some Moravians there, by whose teaching and life he was much impressed. When he left Georgia, amid a storm of ill-feeling and complaints from the settlers, owing to his action in regard to Mrs. Williamson,<sup>1</sup> some Moravian visitors to London were almost the first people he met in England; one of these, Peter Böhler, he met several times, both in London and at Oxford, and his influence on Wesley was remarkable. Good Christian and Churchman though he was, Wesley now felt he had not "faith": he was "unconverted," and "on Sunday the 5th [of March, 1738]," he says, "I was clearly convinced of unbelief." Knowing as we do his previous life, this sounds very extraordinary; but it was evidently real—at least to Wesley. But he was in a very curious emotional and spiritual state, and continued thus for two months. Suddenly, one evening, the now famous May 24th, 1738, at a religious meeting in Aldersgate Street, "when a person read Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, which teaches what justifying faith is . . . I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and *an assurance was given me* that He had taken away my sins." In fact John Wesley was "instantaneously converted." Yet it was several months before he "found peace," for, even during

<sup>1</sup> This incident can be read at length in any life of Wesley. It does not concern us very much, except as the cause of his return to England. Wesley was always unfortunate in his relations to women.

the next year, he says he is not a Christian in the true sense. But the greatest event of his life had now happened, and his distinct and special work had now begun. A visit to the Moravian communities at Marienborn and Herrnhut, in Germany, confirmed and soothed his mind, and then commenced (1738) that continual journeying and preaching throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles, that was to last for more than half a century, and was to produce one of the greatest religious revivals of any church.

### § 7. *The Methodist Societies.*

From this time forward the organization of Methodist "Societies" became Wesley's chief practical work. Yet they were, in one sense, no new thing. In fact, in all the institutions of this great man, it is strange to remark how few there were that originated from himself. Many of them were copied from the Primitive Church; some were suggested by friends; some were modifications of agencies already in existence. "The Religious Societies," for instance, had been a conspicuous feature of the stricter and more devout Church life in the times of Wesley's father, in the seventeenth century. And the fact that they existed, as they exist to-day, in the eighteenth-century Church, surely shows that that Church was not as dead as people have sometimes imagined it was. In his earlier Journals John Wesley frequently speaks of "going to a Society" without any further explanation, evidently knowing that every one would understand what was meant. And now, too, the United Societies of the new Methodism were only continuations of his Oxford Society, for John Wesley himself says plainly: "The first rise of Methodism was in November, 1729, when four of us met together at Oxford; the second



was at Savannah in April, 1736, when twenty or thirty persons met at my house; the last was at London, when forty or fifty of us agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening, in order to free conversation, begun and ended with singing and prayer."<sup>1</sup> This London Society met in Fetter Lane, which may be looked upon as the Methodist Mecca. But it soon split up (1739), and another was formed, with its head-quarters in the Foundry, Windmill Street, near Finsbury Square. It met in what was merely a shed-like building, containing a room for the meeting of classes, and a school-room, while overhead were John Wesley's own little rooms, his only home for many years. On July 23rd, 1740, "our little company met at the Foundry instead of Fetter Lane," and from that time forward the Methodist movement spread rapidly, the earlier societies being formed, besides London, in Bristol, Kingswood, and Newcastle-on-Tyne. The founder's own definition of such a society was merely "a company of men having the form, and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

Now it is noticeable that Wesley began his work by means of these societies, not by open-air preaching. To the latter form of exhortation he was, owing to his strong adhesion to Church forms and ceremonies, at first positively averse. He was led into field-preaching by the example and persuasion of his great contemporary religious reformer George Whitefield. Yet he did not like it. In his Journal of March 31st, 1739, he writes—"Reached Bristol and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at

<sup>1</sup> *Ecclesiastical History*, iv. 175.

first to this strange way of preaching in fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday, having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church." But he soon changed his views, and most of his work henceforth was done in the open air.

The mere outlines of this work are sufficient to make one gasp with astonishment. Commencing not until he was thirty-six years of age, he went to and fro preaching and teaching for half a century. In this time he travelled 225,000 miles, or between 4,000 and 5,000 miles a year, in a coach or on horseback; he preached more than 40,000 sermons to congregations of all numbers from twenty to twenty thousand; he organized and superintended hundreds of societies in every part of the kingdom; and yet found time to write and publish a mass of literature of extraordinary volume and range of thought.<sup>1</sup>

#### § 8. *Wesley's Social Reforms.*

But it is time now to turn from the religious to the social side of Wesley's work. The fruits of Wesley's teaching were, of course, not felt very early in his career. It was not till the religious factor had impressed men's souls that social results began to follow. There was not, indeed, opportunity for social upheavals such as resulted from the teaching of John Ball; nor was there any need for such, for the population was enjoying a very fair standard of comfort during the middle of last century.<sup>2</sup> The average wages of agricultural labourers were from ten to eleven shillings

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the list on pp. 171—178 of Overton's *Wesley*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. my *Industrial History*, pp. 148—150.

a week, which at that time would procure a far greater supply of food than now. House rents were very low; a plot of land with a cottage was the rule, not the exception; the artisan used to supplement his wages by working on his own land round his dwelling; and the domestic system of industry afforded constant and (generally) regular employment for all members of the family at their own homes. Whatever may have been the evils of eighteenth-century life, the evils of mixed labour in large factories and towns, of overcrowded dwellings, and of "sweated" labour were not among them. No, Wesley's hearers did not require any consolation as to their material condition. But they were given to coarseness, brutality, smuggling, bribery, and similar vices, against which he steadily set his face. He aimed at making his hearers and followers good citizens as well as good Christians. He spoke out boldly against smuggling: "What has a thief to do with religion?"<sup>1</sup> he asked. "A smuggler is a thief of the first order, a highwayman or pickpocket of the worst sort."<sup>2</sup> He actively interfered to prevent bribery and other malpractices at the St. Ives election in July, 1747.<sup>3</sup> He protested vigorously against the negro slave-trade, "that execrable sum of all villanies," as he called it. But, not satisfied with words only, he promoted in practice several institutions which have in our own days been revived, independently, by bodies like the Church Army and the Salvation Army. Thus we see him in one case actively engaged in starting relief work for the unemployed; in another organizing systematically the gifts of food and

<sup>1</sup> To the Bristol Societies in 1764.

<sup>2</sup> *A Word to a Smuggler*, 1767.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal*, July 1st, 1747.

clothing for the poor; or, again, starting a "poor man's bank," or a medical dispensary. In the Journal for November 3rd, 1740, for example, we find the following entry: "We distributed, as every one had need, among the numerous poor of our Society, the clothes of several kinds which many who could spare them had brought for that purpose. *Tuesday, 25th*: After several methods proposed for employing those who were out of business, we determined to make a trial of one which several of our brethren recommended to us. Our aim was, with as little expense as possible, to keep them at once from want and from idleness; in order to do which we took twelve of the poorest, and a teacher, into the Society room, where they were employed for four months, till spring came on, in spinning and carding of cotton. And the design answered: they were employed and maintained with very little more than the produce of their own labour." Next year we find him arranging for the relief of the poor in a different way: "*Thursday, May 7th, 1741*: I reminded the United Society that many of our brethren and sisters had not needful food; many were destitute of convenient clothing; many were out of business, and that without their own fault; and many sick and ready to perish; that I had done what in me lay to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, to employ the poor, and to visit the sick; but I was not alone sufficient for these things, and therefore desired all whose hearts were as my heart—(1) To bring what clothes each could spare, to be distributed among those that wanted most. (2) To give weekly a penny, or what they could afford, for the relief of the poor and sick. My design, I told them, is to employ, for the present, all the women who are out of business, and desire it, in knitting. To

these we will first give the common price for what work they do, and then add according as they need. Twelve persons are appointed to inspect these, and to visit and provide things needful for the sick. Each of these is to visit all the sick within their district, every other day; and to meet on Tuesday evening to give an account of what they have done, and what can be done farther."

The idea of the poor man's loan-bank is thus formulated: "*Sunday, January 17th, 1748*: I made a public collection towards a lending-stock for the poor. Our rule is to lend only 20s. at once, which is repaid weekly within three months. I began this about a year and a half ago: thirty pounds sixteen shillings were then collected; and out of this, no less than two hundred and fifty-five persons have been relieved in eighteen months." In those eighteenth-century days there were no casual wards for the relief of the wandering poor, but in many places the Methodist societies, under Wesley's direction, made a practice of assisting strangers from funds collected among themselves for this purpose. And as for prisoners, Wesley, from the beginning of his career at Oxford to the end, believed strongly in prison-missions. Of the state of the prisons in those days, the following extract gives a vivid but gloomy picture. "*Saturday, February 3rd, 1753*: I visited one in the Marshalsea prison, a nursery of all manner of wickedness. Oh! shame to man that there should be such a place, such a picture of hell upon earth! . . . On Friday and Saturday I visited as many more as I could. Some I found in their cells underground; others in their garrets, half-starved both with cold and hunger added to weakness and pain. But I found not one of them unemployed who was able to crawl about the room. So

wickedly, devilishly false is that common objection: 'They are poor only because they are idle!' If you saw these things with your own eyes, could you lay out money in ornaments or superfluities?" Indeed, the reformer and preacher himself was so persuaded of the wickedness of "ornaments and superfluities" that he spoke very strong words upon the subject of money as the root of all evil. "The designedly procuring more of this world's goods," he says, in one sermon, "than will supply the plain necessities of life (not delicacies, not superfluities), the labouring after a larger measure of worldly substance, a larger measure of gold and silver, the laying up more than these ends require, is expressly and absolutely forbidden." And again: "Hoard nothing, lay up no treasure in earth, but give all you can—that is, all you have. I defy all the men upon earth, yea, all the angels in heaven, to find any other way of extracting poison from riches."

### § 9. *Half a Century's Work.*

Such was the social teaching and practice of this great man; and so he taught and preached and acted for half a century. But of course his social reforms were only incidents in the great religious revival which he set on foot. That revival was not allowed to proceed without some measure of persecution, though this was by no means so severe as some have wished to make out. On the part of the Church, its clergy and bishops, there was, indeed, more apathy than persecution. But within five weeks of his return from Germany in 1738, he was called upon to see the Bishop of London (Dr. Gibson) to answer various complaints about his preaching. Yet he was not treated unkindly by the Bishop; what Wesley had to find fault

with was rather the lack of guidance and distinct advice which a prelate in Dr. Gibson's position might have given him. However, the clergy were not so lenient, and by the close of 1738 John Wesley was "almost universally excluded from the pulpits of the Established Church,"<sup>1</sup> though it must be admitted that having only been ordained to a Fellowship he could hardly expect to be allowed to preach in whatever diocese he wished without the consent of its Bishop. And the extraordinary and revolting physical phenomena, such as fits and convulsions,<sup>2</sup> which so frequently resulted among his hearers from his excitable preaching could hardly commend it to the staid dignitaries of the Church, especially to a man like Bishop Butler, with whom Wesley had an interesting interview in 1739. Butler, with his calm and scholarly mind, had but little sympathy with sensational enthusiasm. "Sir," said he to John Wesley severely, "the pretending to extraordinary revelation and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing—a very horrid thing." He even asked Wesley "to go hence" out of his diocese.

But Church apathy was preferable to mob violence ; and from this last John Wesley was on several occasions in great danger of his life. It broke out first in Bristol and London, in his early career, but was there stopped by the magistrates. It reached its climax among the colliers of Staffordshire in the summer of 1743, and in Walsall and Wednesbury in that year he narrowly escaped death at their hands. In other places also he often carried his life, as it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wesley's *Farther Appeal*, p. 113, and Overton's *Wesley*, pp. 94—96.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. in the *Journal*, April 26th, 1739, the extraordinary scenes at Newgate, Bristol.

were, in his hands, but his cool courage—for he always made a point of facing a mob—always brought him triumphantly out of danger. But, after all, he hardly ever met with any more violent opposition than the Salvation Army has encountered in our own day.

More serious dangers for the real cause of Methodism were to be feared from internal dissensions among his own followers. From first to last he had many trials of this nature, and the Methodist cause has been greatly hindered by the more formidable divergencies which have created so many various bodies among the followers of Wesley at the present time. One of the most serious divergencies from a trusted friend occurred in the case of George Whitefield, and turned upon the question of Calvinistic doctrine. As this is not a theological work it is unnecessary to go into the details of the controversy. All we need say, is that George Whitefield's views on Calvinism were not Wesley's, for Wesley believed that such doctrine would hinder the spread of Christian holiness among the mass of the people. But although a temporary alienation between these two great founders of Methodism took place, the dispute was finally arranged by the help of Charles Wesley, and the three leaders—the Wesleys and Whitefield—became “a threefold cord which could not be broken.” Nor was it broken except by death, and when Whitefield passed away in 1770, it was John Wesley who preached his funeral sermon.

#### § 10. *Wesley's Character and Influence.*

In this controversy, as indeed throughout his whole life, we see once more the signs of that singular sweetness of disposition and gentleness of character which are the main characteristics of the religious reformer. True, in spite of



his gentleness, John Wesley had a will of his own, a will that made itself felt very forcibly at times ; insomuch that to this day he has been frequently accused of autocracy and obstinacy. But autocracy is the very essence of a real leader of men, and this charge may be suffered to remain unanswered. What strikes us even more than his power of commanding obedience, is the open simplicity of his nature and his pleasant humour, evident to his contemporaries in his daily walk and conversation, and to readers of to-day in those Journals that call back to us very vividly the picture of a frank and trusting nature, of a man as precise and exact in his religious organization as in his neat clerical attire, and in his courteous manners ; stern and commanding when sternness and strength of will were necessary, yet at ordinary times genial and kindly, even humorous, both in his speech and writings, and at all times serenely happy in the consciousness of performing his Master's work.

Of that work, it has been well said, Methodism itself is one of the least significant results. True, at his death in 1791 his followers were counted by the thousand, and to-day are counted by the million. But even they were the least result of the Methodist revival.<sup>1</sup> For its effects were felt far and wide in other directions. The Church of England awoke once more from its apathy and sloth, and its clergy roused themselves from lifelessness and contempt to a practical religious energy of which we still feel the force. And in the nation at large appeared a new moral enthusiasm which, rigid and pedantic though it often seemed, was still healthy in social tone, and whose power was seen in the partial disappearance of the open profligacy which disgraced the early Georgian era. Philan-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Green, IV. 149.

thropy, and social reform generally, received a fresh stimulus among the mass of the nation, a stimulus whose effects were afterwards seen in an amelioration of our penal code, more humanity in our prison life, and a feeling of indignation against negro slavery. Wesley helped also, we believe, very largely the growth of the national consciousness of the English people, by giving men something more to think about than their own individual aims and their own individual life. Especially was this the case among the poorer people, and it is curious to note how many leaders of the working classes have sprung from the ranks of Methodism.<sup>1</sup> For nearly half a century, John Wesley was, as Mr. Stead has put it in his curious way, a highly-vitalized human shuttlecock, constantly flying backwards and forwards in the national loom, and weaving together into one organic whole the isolated and widely-scattered communities which made up the English people. And the noblest result of his work, unconscious though I believe it to be, was the stimulus he gave to all the noble and humane impulses of his time to work together patiently and hopefully for the relief of human misery and degradation in all its forms.

To the last Wesley worked on unremittingly. In one passage of his diary, when he was preparing at a friend's house for a meeting of the Conference, he wrote bravely: "How willingly could I spend the residue of a busy life in this delightful retirement! But, 'Man was not born in shades to lie!' Up and be doing. Labour on, till

'Death sings a requiem to the parting soul.'"

And so he laboured on, labouring not in vain, till the end came quietly, on March 2nd, 1791, and at last he was able to rest.

<sup>1</sup> Several of the labour M.P.'s and Mr. Joseph Arch, for instance.

## II. WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

§ 1. *Boyhood and College Days.*

THE last letter that John Wesley wrote (February 24th, 1791) was addressed to the man who had determined to root out negro slavery, at any rate as far as England was concerned. "Go on," said the dying preacher, "go on in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it." And thus it will not be inopportune to join to our sketch of Wesley's work a short *résumé* of that of William Wilberforce, who himself was a sincere admirer of both John and Charles Wesley, and their personal acquaintance. There is little doubt that Wilberforce was much strengthened in his crusade against negro slavery by the sympathy, not only of the Wesleys and men like them, but also of many people in all ranks of life, who, perhaps, but for the stimulus of the Methodist revival, would have treated the whole question with indifference. And Wilberforce himself, though not a Methodist in name, was really of the same religious and moral mould. He was essentially a religious man; like Wesley he could point definitely to a certain epoch of his life as the period of his conversion; like Wesley he had all the enthusiasm and earnestness of a religious rather than a social reformer. But a social reformer he was, nevertheless, and that too, unlike Wesley, consciously and purposely.

His position in society and his mental talents gave him from the first considerable advantages in influencing his fellows. Born in August 1759, he was the son of a wealthy merchant of Hull, the descendant of an ancient and honour-

able Yorkshire family. By the death of a grandfather and an uncle, he found himself, while yet an undergraduate at Cambridge (to which University he went up in 1776), the possessor of a considerable fortune; and although the combined temptations of youth and wealth were sufficiently strong<sup>1</sup> to prevent him distinguishing himself academically as highly as he might have done, he became a good classic, and did well in his examinations. Yet Cambridge in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was not a very encouraging *alma mater* to one like Wilberforce, as regards academic studies. Speaking of the Fellows of his college (St. John's), he says himself: "But those with whom I was intimate did not act towards me the part of Christians, or even of honest men. Their object seemed to be, to make and keep me idle. If ever I appeared studious they would say to me: 'Why in the world should a man of your fortune trouble himself with fagging?' While my companions were reading hard and attending lectures, card-parties and idle amusements consumed my time. The tutors would often say within my hearing that *they* were mere saps, but that I did all by talent. This was poison to a mind constituted like mine." Is it not to his eternal credit that the poison had so little after effect upon his character?

### § 2. *Political Life.*

Before he had left the University, Wilberforce had determined to enter Parliament, more for his own pleasure, as is generally the case, than from any desire to serve his

<sup>1</sup> He was at one time addicted to gambling, losing £100 in a night on one occasion. His winning £600 one night from some men who could ill afford it, was the cause of his giving up play altogether. Cf. *Life*, p. 8.

country. He aspired to represent his native town of Hull, as a dissolution was shortly expected. Whilst in London, waiting for the dissolution, he constantly frequented the gallery of the House of Commons, and there met Mr. Pitt, "then serving a like apprenticeship to public business." By September the dissolution had come, and Wilberforce found himself back again in Hull, in the wild excitement of a hotly-contested election, and that at a time when election tactics were a great deal more violent than now. He was fortunate enough to come out head of the poll, with over a thousand votes, thus having as many as his two opponents—Lord Robert Manners and David Hartley—together. The election cost him, according to the pleasant custom of those old days, between £8000 and £9000, but his success shed a considerable lustre upon this formal entry into public life, especially as he was only twenty-one years of age.

He came to London and entered at once into the fashionable society of the capital, a constant frequenter of the most noted drawing-rooms and clubs, the friend of nearly all the most brilliant wits and politicians of the day. He became especially intimate with Pitt, then a young man like himself, who had become (1781) member for Appleby. Wilberforce was an independent politician, but though attentive to public business, he did not hasten to join in the debates.<sup>1</sup> He was an opponent to the War of American Independence. But in spite of his independence and slowness to speak, an ambitious political career could easily have been his, had he so wished. In July 1782 Pitt took office with the Shelburne Ministry, and Wilberforce was asked to second the Address at the meeting of Parliament in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Life*, p. 9.

December. Pitt was becoming more and more powerful as a rising politician, and his intimacy with Wilberforce—for he was constantly at Wilberforce's house at Wimbledon at this time, and took a continental tour with him in 1785—would have been of inestimable advantage to the young member for Hull. And for a time it seemed as if politics would claim him entirely. Pitt became Prime Minister in November 1783, and Wilberforce eagerly supported him, still as an independent member. Then in 1784 occurred Wilberforce's tremendous success in winning the election for the county membership of Yorkshire. He had gone to York to make a speech in condemnation of the coalition ministry; before his speech was ended there arose a mighty shout in the castle yard: "We'll have this man for our county member!" And despite the tremendous influence of the Whig nobility of the district, and his own youth and want of county connexions, Wilberforce found himself suddenly a county member, without even a contest. His popularity had become so overwhelming that his opponents refused to go to the poll! Thus, before he was twenty-five he had made his mark in politics and done his party a signal service, for it was this great triumph in Yorkshire that contributed in no small degree to the success of Pitt's ministry throughout the country.

### § 3. *Conversion and its Results.*

But something occurred which changed altogether the course of his life. He passed through a religious crisis something like that through which John Wesley had passed after his acquaintance with the Moravians. This religious change in Wilberforce's life may be said to date more or less from the years 1784 and 1785, during which he took a

continental tour, including Nice and Spa, with the Rev. Isaac Milner, afterwards Dean of Carlisle, a rough Yorkshire clergyman of a curious philosophical turn, but a man of genuine piety and of deep religious feeling. Like Wesley, Wilberforce discovered that he was not a Christian. "In the true sense of the word, I was not a Christian. I laughed, I sang, I was apparently gay and happy; but the thought would steal across me—What madness is all this! to continue easy in a state in which a sudden call out of the world would consign me to everlasting misery, and that when eternal happiness is within my grasp."<sup>1</sup> On the 10th of November 1785, he returned to his villa at Wimbledon, and "was much alone; and the more he reflected, the deeper became his new impressions." He commenced a private journal, with the view of making himself "humble and watchful."<sup>2</sup> He was evidently in the same state as was Wesley just before that memorable evening in Aldersgate Street. Wilberforce, however, could not point so clearly to any definite day of "conversion," but a distinct religious landmark in his life was his first reception of the Holy Eucharist on Good Friday, April 14th, 1786. From this Easter onwards there is a tone of settled peace and calm about him, and a strong resolution to do God's work. "By degrees the promises and offers of the Gospel produced in me something of a settled peace of conscience. I devoted myself for whatever might be the term of my future life to the service of my God and Saviour, and with many infirmities and deficiencies, through His help, I continue until this day."<sup>3</sup>

He soon found plenty of work to do. Deserting politics,

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> His own *Journal*, Nov. 21st, 1785.

<sup>3</sup> Written towards the close of his life.

except for philanthropic purposes, and giving up even his villa at Wimbledon as a needless luxury, he busied himself in the formation of a Society for the Reformation of Manners, "to resist the spread of open immorality." He visited several bishops in order to induce them to become members of his association, and got the Duke of Montagu, and after his death Lord Bathurst and Bishop Porteus, to preside over its meetings; and before its dissolution it had obtained many valuable Acts of Parliament, and greatly checked the spread of blasphemous and indecent publications.<sup>1</sup>

This took place in 1787, and in the autumn of that year he began to prepare seriously for his great work, the abolition of the slave-trade. As early as the year 1780, he had been interested more particularly in West Indian slavery, and in November 1783 had had a very important conversation with the Rev. James Ramsay, the author of an essay on slavery that attracted much attention. He now felt called upon by God to fight against this disgraceful trade. "God has set before me," he says,<sup>2</sup> "two great objects—the suppression of the slave-trade, and the reformation of manners." Truly these were herculean tasks. Who could find to-day a reformer able to deal simultaneously with slavery and immorality, two evils which exist as sadly and as surely in England to-day as they existed in the America and England of the last century? For it should never be forgotten that negro slavery is only one form, and by no means the worst, of a slavery which is bound to exist more or less in every civilized country under certain conditions of industry. And it was certainly paralleled by horrors practised upon children in England in the present century. People nowadays are

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, October 28th, 1787.



far too fond of crying out, *Nous avons changé tout cela* ! and of abusing the evils of the eighteenth century, as if that was a particularly wicked, and this a particularly virtuous age. As a matter of fact, both are much on the same level.

§ 4. *The Slave-Trade and Granville Sharp.*

But, of course, the slave-trade had to be abolished. It was a disgrace to civilization, though some civilized countries then did not hold the same views as we do now. It began, as far as English traders are concerned, with Sir John Hawkins' venture in 1562, though the Portuguese had been engaged in it more than a hundred years before that (1442). The trade was comparatively trifling till the sixteenth century, for the West Indies and America had not till then been much developed by Europeans, and the native Indians had been used as slaves by their conquerors the Spaniards. As these Indians were nearly exterminated, owing to the cruelty of their toil and the merciless rapacity of their masters, it was found necessary to introduce the sturdier negroes to supply their place. The trade between the West Coast of Africa and the American continent and islands increased very rapidly, so that between the years 1680 and 1700 some 300,000 negroes, it is said, were exported from Africa by English merchants, and, from 1700 to 1786, 610,000 Africans were imported into Jamaica alone. Into the horrors of the passage between Africa and the West Indies I will not go ; they have been sufficiently described by many writers. Nor will I discuss the question of the treatment of slaves by their English masters, except in so far as to remark that it was probably no worse than that which they would have received from their black brethren in Africa, and very often not so bad as the treatment of white children in English

factories.<sup>1</sup> However, it was perhaps as well that slavery should be abolished, and certainly desirable that the slave-trade from Africa should be stopped. But it should be admitted that many good men in previous times saw no harm in it, just as many really estimable persons of to-day cheerfully buy "sweated" clothes, matches, and confectionery, and regard with complacency the extraordinary leniency of the law towards torturers of children and wife-beaters, seeing no harm in the social opinion which allows these enormities to continue.

But in the last century, as has been well remarked, it required no little fortitude to undertake the cause of the negro race. Burke had shrunk from engaging in it from the conviction of its hopelessness, and the harassing failures in store for Wilberforce would have discouraged any man whose exertions were not sustained by the highest principle. Yet Wilberforce was not alone. There was already in existence a Society "for the abolition of Negro Slavery," formed in London May 22nd, 1787, whose president was the celebrated Granville Sharp, already known as the author of a stirring pamphlet on "*The Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of tolerating Slavery in England.*" It was Granville Sharp, too, who had generously and valiantly brought forward the case of the negro Somerset, a victim of cruel oppression and desertion. The slave Somerset had been brought to London by his master, but on falling ill was at once turned out of doors into the streets by his heartless owner. He was thus found by Sharp, sick unto death and destitute, and was taken to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Being fortunately restored to health, he was placed in a situation as a servant by his benefactor. Suddenly, quite

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the facts given in my remarks on Richard Oastler.

two years after being turned out to die in the streets, he was reclaimed by his former master, and sent by him to prison as a "runaway." Granville Sharp took up his case, and brought it before the Lord Mayor, who ordered the slave to be released. But in defiance of this decision his original owner seized Somerset again before the very eyes of Sharp and the Lord Mayor, and insisted upon his legal claim to his "property." Sharp then brought an action for technical assault, and after another trial, the case was referred as a question of law to twelve judges. At length, after being long argued, it was declared (May 1772) by the unanimous decision of the judges, that by the law of England a slave, as soon as he sets foot on English territory, becomes free.

#### § 5. *Wilberforce's Work.*

Most of the members who formed the nucleus of Granville Sharp's society were Quakers. Backed up by them, and by the help of Sharp and Thomas Clarkson, Wilberforce for twenty years continued the great struggle in the cause of humanity. His efforts were indefatigable, but he had need of all his resources. Year after year, in Parliament and out of Parliament, he carried on the contest, now seeking to stir the sentiments of the humane and religious, now working slowly and wearily through the mazes of Parliamentary opposition. His speeches in the house were admirable, supported as they were by masses of the most carefully collected evidence. Outside its walls he became, as it were, all things to all men, conciliating, both by conversation and correspondence, the leading men of all parties to his one great ideal. The press was used to its fullest extent by himself and his friends; pamphlets and letters and appeals

poured forth upon the apathetic masses of the people, till at length the seed that had been so widely sown began to bear a little fruit.

But much opposition met him in his difficult path. The negroes themselves seemed to fight against him. Apart from the very natural general revulsion against new ideas of liberty produced by certain excesses in the French Revolution, there was a particular feeling of distrust against the black races, on account of the rebellion of the slaves in St. Domingo, which led many good people to associate abolition of slavery with a general upheaval of society. It is said that the St. Domingo affair alone delayed Wilberforce's cause for seven years. Meanwhile, his own physical strength seemed as if it would fail him. An attack of disease in the digestive organs in 1788 was followed by great prostration and general weakness. Writing at York on New Year's Day 1790, he exclaims almost heartbroken: "At thirty and a half, I am in constitution sixty." A weakness of the eyes also contributed to render his noble work more and more difficult. Yet, in spite of all this, he published in January 1807, after ten years of unremitting labour, a book upon the slave-trade, just at the time when the question was being discussed in the House of Lords. The effect was tremendous. The Abolition Bill passed the Lords, and "its passage through the Commons was one continued triumph for the author."

#### § 6. *Influence of Contemporary Events.*

In the hasty words of the above paragraph has been sketched the work of half a lifetime, for it would be impossible in a brief sketch like this to detail the weary labours, the slow advances, the sharp recoils and renewed

advances of the great movement which Wilberforce sustained and guided. Below is given an abstract of the chief points in the progress of the abolition movement,<sup>1</sup> but during the whole period of the abolitionist agitation many other stirring events were engaging the public mind, and diverting the national attention from the negroes and their wrongs. It was the time when England was engaged in her long twenty years' struggle against France and Napoleon, the master of France—a struggle that meant war unto the death, and that even now, nearly a hundred years afterwards, fills us with amazement and exulting admiration for the bravery displayed by our forefathers in fighting against such fearful odds. It was the time, too, when English industry was passing through the throes of the new birth of the Industrial Revolution, which, in regard to permanent and far-reaching effects, was at least as epoch-making as the political Revolution in France, for it has transformed with an almost absolute completeness the face of modern European states, and has brought into play factors which cause mere politics to pale into insignificance beside them. Then again it was

<sup>1</sup> 1787, Association for the abolition of slavery formed; 1789, Wilberforce, Fox, and Burke in Parliament support resolutions against the slave-trade; 1791, Wilberforce's motion, in the House of Commons, for abolition of the slave-trade, though supported by Pitt and Fox, was rejected by 163 votes to 88; in 1792 a Bill for the abolition passes the Commons, but is postponed by the Lords; 1804, Wilberforce's Abolition Bill passed again by the Commons, but thrown out by the Lords; 1806, resolutions in favour of abolition proposed by Fox and Grenville in the Commons, and carried; 1807, the Act for the abolition of the slave-trade is finally passed. It was not, however, till August 1833 that the Act for the *Emancipation* of Slaves passed the Lords and became law; and the total abolition, not only of the *slave-trade*, but of slavery itself, took effect in our colonies on August 1st, 1834, when £20,000,000 compensation was paid to the slave-owners.

the time when the seeds of Parliamentary Reform—with all that this concise and cold title implies—had begun to germinate and sprout forth into life ; when mobs of starving workmen clamoured on the one hand for the destruction of new machinery that seemed to be snatching from them their very chances of life, and, on the other hand, demanded in voices that daily grew louder and louder more equal representation of their class in the government of the kingdom. Is it to be wondered that, amid forces and passions such as these, the cause of the negro made but slow progress ? Rather is it to the eternal credit of the English people that at such a season of peril and of change it could yet spare something more than a moment to the cause of a foreign and inferior race. And by a strange irony of fate, during all this troublous and changeful period, there was growing up in the mills and factories created by the new Industrial Revolution a slavery of white children as appalling and as disastrous as the slavery that Wilberforce was attempting to destroy. Of this we shall speak in discussing the work of the following reformers, Oastler and Shaftesbury. Here we must hasten on to the successful close of Wilberforce's labour in the cause of the blacks.

### § 7. *The Crown of Victory.*

As we said above, the year 1807 was the year of Wilberforce's victory. But as yet it was only partial. The trade in slaves had been abolished, but the institution resulting from and fed by that trade still existed and flourished. Years more were required to bring about the absolute abolition of black slavery in English dominions. Slaves could still be kept and worked, though they could not be imported amid the horrors of the former "Middle Passage" ;

and other countries than England could still connive at the traffic in negro flesh. So from 1807 to 1833 Wilberforce worked as unremittingly as before in the new attempt to do away with slave-holding altogether. He overlooked no factor that could serve his purpose. The overthrow of Napoleon in 1814, the Congress of Vienna and the visit of the Allied Sovereigns to London in the same year, the final blow of Waterloo in 1815—all were turned by him to useful account. He visited personally the Czar of Russia and the King of Prussia when they were in England, and besought their aid. The Iron Duke himself, the ill-fated Lord Castlereagh, the wily diplomatist M. de Talleyrand, and many another great minister of the day, were all in turn approached, exhorted, and entreated. But now his health began to fail. In 1825 he had reluctantly to retire from Parliament, after very nearly half a century of public life. Mr. Fowell Buxton took his place as "the member for abolition," and the great reformer himself spent what remained to him of life in comparative rest and retirement—"an affectionate, cheerful, benevolent and devout old man," devoting as he had done through life much of his time and most of his income to acts of private and unostentatious charity. But though the worker had retired, his work was still going on, and just before his death the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery was read a second time. "Thank God," he exclaimed, "that I should have lived to witness a day in which England is willing to give twenty millions sterling for the abolition of slavery." This was on Friday, July 26th, 1833. On the following Monday Wilberforce passed away, a warrior rejoicing in his last and greatest victory. The nation honoured him and itself by granting him a public funeral in Westminster Abbey. "Biography,"

says Sir James Stephen, "must be parsimonious of her honours ; yet, even in the age of Burke and Mirabeau, of Napoleon and Wellington, of Goethe and of Walter Scott, she could not have justly refused them to one who, by paths till then untrodden, reached a social and political eminence never before attained by any man, unaided by place, by party, or by the sword."



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THE FACTORY REFORMERS:  
OWEN, OASTLER, AND SHAFTESBURY.



# THE FACTORY REFORMERS.

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## I.

### § 1. *The Industrial Revolution.*

A GOOD many people know now that whilst the abolition of slavery was being agitated with so much earnestness and philanthropy, as regards black slaves abroad, there was growing up a white slavery quite as bad at home—a white slavery, which in some of its aspects is not yet abolished, and which has done incalculable harm to the present generation of English men and women. A good many people know it; but after all, not so many as know about the wrongs of the negro race; and this is not surprising, for it went on under the very eyes of our grandfathers and fathers, and perhaps it is still going on to-day. At any rate, it can do no harm to emphasize the fact that white slavery, and what is worse, child slavery, was quite a common state of things in the England of 1800, and—at the risk of offending many well-meaning people—it is well to remark that the word “slavery” is used advisedly and deliberately, and as conveying its ordinary meaning. The proofs of the statement are not to be found in the pages of hysterical reformers or excited agitators, but in the dry official records of the

*Blue Books* containing the results of the parliamentary commissions of the early part of this century, and these are the principal authorities for the facts which are related in this part of the present book.

By the year 1800—which we may take as a date because it is a round number—the Industrial Revolution had fully begun its work in this country, both for good and evil. That Revolution, to summarize it in a sentence, was a complete change of the conditions of manufacture, from industry carried on more or less under the domestic system to industry carried on in factories. The one was scattered, the other collective. In the one the workman was often the master, and the master often the workman; in the second, the workman and the master had become very distinct. In the one, work was generally carried on at home, amid home surroundings and influence; in the other, work and home were for ever dissociated, and the workman became only a unit, a “hand” among thousands of others, with no bond of union between themselves and their masters but that bond of money wages that so often dissevers rather than unites the two classes of employers and employed. Of the coming of the Revolution, and the introduction of machinery worked by steam power instead of by hand, we cannot here speak. All we have to do is to notice its effect upon the social condition of the people, and upon the nature of their employment.

### § 2. *Employment of Children.*

“In the height of the great duel between France and England, when the English manufacturers represented to Mr. Pitt that the rise in the rate of wages incapacitated

them from paying the taxes, he pronounced the terrible words: *Take the children*. Those words weigh heavily upon England as a curse." So says the great French historian, Michelet, in writing of the terrible struggle between France and England in the Continental and Napoleonic wars of 1795 to 1815. He is wrong in ascribing the actual words to the younger Pitt,<sup>1</sup> but he is right as to the main fact of the case—that the manufacturers "took the children." For about the end of last century the possibility of utilizing child labour in running the new machinery became fully appreciated. A Lancashire physician, Dr. Aikin, in his description of the country round Manchester in 1795, tells us the result in the words of an eye-witness: "The invention and improvement of machines to shorten labour have had a surprising influence to extend our trade, and also to call in hands from all parts, *particularly children*, for the cotton mills. In these, children of a very tender age are employed, many of them collected from the workhouses in London and Westminster, and transported in crowds as apprentices to masters resident many hundreds of miles distant, where they serve unknown, unprotected, and forgotten by those to whose care nature or the law had confided them. These children are usually too long confined to work, in close rooms, often during the whole night."

Dr. Aikin's description was written almost exactly fifty years before the passing of the Ten Hours<sup>2</sup> Bill. The half century that intervened presents an almost unique record of horror and misery for the children of the poor.

<sup>1</sup> Possibly William Pitt's speech of February 12th, 1796, upon industrial schools may have caused Michelet's mistake.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Factory Movement*, i. 117.

§ 3. *Treatment of Apprentices in Factories.*

Many children, Dr. Aikin said, were collected from London and other southern workhouses. The traffic was regular and systematic. The northern mill-owners communicated with the overseers of the poor, and a sufficient supply of children having been provided for the latter, a day was fixed for their examination and selection by the mill-owner or his deputy. Those selected were then taken in waggons or canal boats to their destination, if it was already fixed. But it often happened that the contracting party was a mere trafficker, a middleman, and not the principal; and so, if he had not already a market in some mill for his white slaves, these were kept in dark cellars or other abodes in Manchester or elsewhere, till some mill-owner was pleased to come and examine their limbs and stature, and strike a bargain for their conveyance to his factory.<sup>1</sup> Once in the mill, the round of slavery was unceasing. The mills were run night and day in those brisk times, when Lancashire cotton-spinners declared "it was not profits of hundreds but of thousands per cent. that made their fortunes." One relay of children rose wearily from their beds as another relay came to throw themselves down in their places, in beds where vice, disease, and death grew rank as in a teeming ground.<sup>2</sup> They were fed on the coarsest and cheapest food, or rather were starved upon it, so that they often fought with their master's pigs for the refuse of the swine-trough.<sup>3</sup> They were worked sixteen,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the well-authenticated *Memoirs of Robert Blincoe*.

<sup>2</sup> Discrimination of sexes was often not regarded at all. Cf. evidence before the Sadler Committee, 1832 (evidence of J. Paterson, overseer, Dundee).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Blincoe's *Memoirs*,

eighteen, or even a larger number of hours at a stretch, "till many weary victims, young in years but old in suffering, nightly prayed that death would come to their relief." Sometimes they tried to run away, but it was an almost hopeless attempt; and when brought back, their sufferings were generally worse than before, for now their bondage was made even more literal, and chains were riveted upon their limbs. "Even young women, if only suspected of intending to run away, had irons riveted to their ankles, reaching by long links and rings up to the hips; and in these they were compelled to walk to and from the mill, and to sleep." Cruel punishment was their lot if their merciless tasks were not fulfilled—punishment that not unfrequently ended in death. The lash was almost constantly in requisition, and many kinds of tortures were used to compel the sinking frames of the apprentices to pursue their unceasing toil. At length, wearied out and worked to death, their forms stunted and misshapen by accidents and overwork, often scarred and bruised by the whip of the overseer, these poor wretches found a merciful relief in death. Many a silent plantation and lonely moorland is a silent repository of dark secrets over which an outcast's grave has for ever closed.

#### § 4. *Early Factory Acts.*

All this time the friends of the negro were harrowing the feelings of the inhabitants of the country in which these daily and nightly cruelties were perpetrated with tales of the sufferings of the unfortunate black men. No notice was taken of the horrors going on under the very eyes of the agitators, till at length the miseries of the factories began to avenge themselves upon a callous population in the shape



of malignant fevers, bred from the horribly insanitary condition of the mills in which the apprentice system was in force. In Manchester a committee had to be formed (1796) to inquire into "the health of the poor"; and after six years of desultory parliamentary discussion, Sir Robert Peel brought in and passed a Bill for the preservation of the health and morals of apprentices and others employed in cotton and other factories (1802). Indeed, some such measure was found to be necessary as a preventive of general disease. By this Act the hours of work (for children!) were limited to only *twelve* per day; night work was to be gradually abolished, and factory inspectors were to be appointed.

But such is the natural astuteness of the human mind when set on gain that this Act soon became practically a dead letter. Workhouse apprentices could now no longer be used up and worked to death, but, as the law did not apply to "free" children of poor parents, the manufacturers could still find plenty of human raw material. And so before long matters in the factories became as bad as ever, and little children of seven years old were worked thirteen or fourteen hours a day, and thrashed and ill-treated as badly as any slave on a West Indian plantation.

#### § 5. *Robert Owen at Lanark Mills.*

It was shortly before this time that Robert Owen had become the part owner of the New Lanark Mills, and was living there as resident manager. He was then only a young man of twenty-eight, but had had a good deal of experience in Manchester as manager of cotton mills, and had become a partner in the new Chorlton Twist Company before he negotiated the purchase of the New Lanark Mills from a

Mr. Dale, whose daughter he almost immediately married. Coming to Lanark, with its lovely surroundings of hills and woods and waters, he found round his mills a population of some 1300 people settled in families in the village, and about four or five hundred miserable pauper children procured from other parishes, whose ages were only from five to ten years instead of the seven or twelve years which had been attributed to them by their masters and sellers. Robert Owen almost at once began to try to improve the moral and physical condition of his work-people, but he found it almost impossible to do anything for the apprentices as regards moral or mental instruction, because their hours of labour were so cruel that any effort to teach them afterwards was simply an additional torment to them. However, in course of time, by arranging the physical conditions of work in a somewhat more humane manner, Owen was able to effect a considerable improvement among both children and adult workers, an improvement of which several years later (1816) he was able to give satisfactory evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons. But what he had seen impelled him to do more, and he began to be one of the earliest and most earnest supporters of shorter hours of labour. One of his plans is particularly worthy of notice, for it shows his endeavour to use favourable conditions of trade as a lever for improvement in the condition of the workers. In 1815 he proposed at a meeting of Scottish cotton-spinners in Glasgow that the Government should be asked to repeal the import duty of about fourpence in the pound on raw cotton, and *at the same time* to limit the age of employment of children, to reduce the hours to ten a day, and to provide for compulsory education in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Needless to say, only the import duty was repealed, and the other proposals were shelved. Nevertheless Robert Owen persisted in his efforts towards a shorter day, and from this time a Ten Hours Bill began to be a measure that was definitely adopted by a small body of social reformers.

§ 6. *Efforts towards Factory Reform.*

Meantime, however, the Act of 1802 seems to have become, even as regards apprentices, a dead letter. White slaves could be bought and sold in England with as much impunity as in the West Indies—in fact with more, for by 1815 Wilberforce's wishes as regards trading in slaves had long since become law. The fact that such sales took place is attested by the debate in the Commons on June 6th, 1815, introduced by Sir Robert Peel, in which one speaker (Horner) described the sending away of children to distant parishes, and gave an instance in which "with a bankrupt's effects a gang of these children had been put up to sale and advertised publicly as part of the property. A still more atrocious instance," he continued, "had been brought before the Court of King's Bench two years ago, when a number of these boys, apprenticed by a parish in London to one manufacturer, had been *transferred* [*i. e.* sold] to another, and had been found by some benevolent persons in a state of absolute famine." Facts like these, even though negroes were not concerned, could no longer be blinked, and at length in 1816 a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to take evidence upon the state of children employed in the manufactories of the United Kingdom. Terrible evidence of over-work was given before this Committee, but the grasp of Mammon was cruel and relentless, and now that social reformers were

in earnest, the inevitable opposition of capitalistic greed rose up in all its power to block the path of humanity. The surest block was the barrier of delay. Further Commissions were asked for by the opponents of factory reform, and the same kind of evidence as before was repeated in 1819 before a Committee of the Lords, and when at last very shame demanded that something should be done, the ineffectual Act 59 George III. c. 7 was passed. This Act when originally introduced was meant to apply to all factories, but it was afterwards limited only to cotton factories, so that it had only a very partial effect, and was even then frequently evaded. And in any case the worsted and woollen mills were not even touched.<sup>1</sup>

§ 7. *Richard Oastler.*

So things went on again as badly as ever for year after year, and manufacturers grew rich while children and young people of both sexes were beaten and overworked to make their profits, and philanthropists riding home late at night from heated meetings after discussing the wrongs of the black slaves looked with cheerful and ignorant complacency at the great factory windows blazing with light, and accepted them "as signs of prosperity," little heeding or knowing the misery and cruelty that dwelt within those brilliant walls. It was, however, one of these friends of the negro, who had often had such a midnight ride, who was suddenly awaked to the fact that slavery was going on in England, while he was agitating for its abolition abroad. Richard Oastler was the man whose eyes were thus opened, a Yorkshireman by

<sup>1</sup> It provided, (1) Nine years to be limit of age for child employment; (2) Twelve-hours day for those under sixteen years; (3) Time to be allowed for meals; (4) Ceilings and walls to be washed with quicklime twice a year.

birth, and one well acquainted with the industries of the busy West Riding.<sup>1</sup> He was once in 1830 staying at the house of a friend who lived at Horton Hall, near Bradford, and was a large manufacturer. As Oastler was talking to him one night about his slavery reforms, his friend John Wood remarked to him: "I wonder you have never turned your attention to the factory system."—"Why should I?" replied the young abolitionist, "I have nothing to do with factories." "Perhaps not," was the answer, "but you are very enthusiastic against slavery in the West Indies, and I assure you that there are cruelties daily practised in our mills on little children, which I am sure if you knew you would try to prevent." And then he went on to describe to his astonished hearer the horrors of the factories. Even in his own mill Wood confessed that little children were worked from six in the morning till seven at night, with a break of only forty minutes, and in many other mills no rest at all was allowed, and that various cruel devices were employed to goad them on to renewed labour. They were fined, beaten with sticks and straps and whips; and the girls were also often subjected to shocking indecencies.

§ 8. *Factory Agitation in Yorkshire. For and Against.*

Oastler, when once he saw what was going on about him in his own country, made no delay in entering upon a warfare that was to last for many a sad and weary year, and to bring many a trial and disaster. The very next day he wrote a long letter to the great Yorkshire daily paper the *Leeds Mercury*, in which he took for his text the old, foolish,

<sup>1</sup> He was born in 1789, and had succeeded his father as steward to Mr. Thornhill on his Yorkshire estates, living at Fixby Hall near Huddersfield.

and utterly untrue statement, "It is the pride of Britain that a slave cannot exist on her soil," and proved very conclusively that slavery could and did exist in a most dreadful form. He pointed out that thousands of children, both male and female, from six to fourteen years of age, and chiefly girls, were compelled to labour thirteen to sixteen hours a day under the lash of an overseer in the mills of Bradford and Morpeth and Huddersfield, and many other northern towns.<sup>1</sup> This sudden revelation of English slavery caused a tremendous sensation, but of course an equally tremendous opposition. The simplest thing was to deny the existence of any such evils, and denials became accordingly remarkably frequent. A keen newspaper correspondence arose, chiefly in the columns of the *Leeds Mercury*; and from this controversy Oastler emerged triumphant, with all his facts proved over and over again, while confirmation of his statements began to pour in from every part of Yorkshire. Before a month had passed a meeting of the worsted spinners of Bradford was called by some of the principal firms in that town (Nov. 22nd), in order to promote legislation on the subject, and a petition was drawn up to be forwarded to Parliament. A similar agitation now arose in Lancashire, and a Bill was laid before the Commons by Lord Morpeth to reduce the hours of work, and raise the limit of age for work in mills. Hope seemed to be dawning for the children of the factories, when all at once the manufacturers of Halifax and district struck the first note of opposition in a counter petition. They set forth the "unimpeachable character for humanity and kindness" possessed by manufacturers as a class; the impossibility of making profits if hours were reduced; the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Leeds Mercury* of 1830. Oastler's letter is dated Sept. 29th.

overpowering force of foreign competition (almost non-existent then as compared with to-day); the general hardships of a manufacturer's lot owing to taxation and other difficulties; and finally "the pernicious tendency of all legislative enactments upon trade and manufactures," or in other words, the necessity of following the golden rule of *laissez faire*.

I have quoted the arguments of this petition because they are in brief a summary of the arguments which were then employed, are now employed, and probably always will be employed against any interference between master and man. In this case the law had only been invoked to step in between master and child; but no matter, the "liberty of the subject" and "freedom of contract" were questions too sacred to be trifled with. And it was soon seen that these arguments of the mill-owners and their friends were by no means lacking in cogency, for the proposed legislation upon the working of factories was modified to such an extent as to make it almost useless, and, in any case, the measure was to be applied to cotton mills only. Oastler felt that the day was lost, and said as much in a public letter to the *Leeds Intelligencer* of October 20th, 1831, a letter which shows cruel disappointment of heart indeed, but yet is as full as ever of fire and hope for the future. Incidentally it is curious to note, from a passage in this letter, that the Factory Reformers of that day were accused of being opposed to the abolition of negro slavery, and were said to be getting up a factory agitation "in order to turn the attention of the nation away from West India slavery." But in spite of calumny, prejudice, and the savage opposition of vested interests, the brave words of Richard Oastler rang forth undauntedly to

the working classes of Yorkshire: "Let no promises of support from any quarter sink you to inactivity. Consider that you must manage this cause yourselves. Collect information and publish facts. Let your politics be: Ten hours a day, and a time-book."

§ 9. *Ten-Hours Day, and Mr. Sadler.*

At this time Oastler was living at Fixby Hall, Huddersfield, and from his position as a Tory and a Churchman, as he describes himself, could not see his way to working actively among the mill hands, who were mostly "Radicals and Dissenters." But now he saw that no barriers of class or creed or politics could be allowed to interfere in this cause, and from henceforth decided to throw in his lot with the factory workers, come what might. He was assisted from the political side by men like T. Hobhouse and M. T. Sadler, both members of Parliament, warmly attached to his cause, and it was decided that Sadler should lead the question in the House of Commons. It would be tedious to go through all the phases of the great Ten Hours Agitation in and out of Parliament; it must suffice to mention that Sadler at length introduced a Ten Hours Bill into the Commons late in 1831 and moved its second reading in March 1832, in a speech of eminent moderation and judgment. He pointed out the existence of child slavery in England and the causes of it, mainly in the poverty but partly in the inducements to laziness of the parents. Many parents were unable to get work themselves, and thus were compelled to hire out their children to the brutalities and hardships of factory work. Some parents, demoralized by the old Poor Law, selfish and brutalized by custom, purchased idleness for themselves at the cost of



their children's health and strength. In some districts, so great was the demand for children's labour, that an indispensable condition of marriage among the working classes was the certainty of offspring, whose wages—beginning at six years old—might keep their inhuman fathers and mothers in idleness. Well might Sadler exclaim, "Our ancestors could not have supposed it possible—posterity will not believe it true—that a generation of Englishmen could exist or had existed, that would work lisping infancy of a few summers old, regardless alike of its smiles or tears and unmoved by its unresisting weakness, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, sixteen hours a day, and through the weary night also, till, in the dewy morn of existence, the bud of youth was faded, and fell ere it was unfolded."

But, to our eternal disgrace as a nation, that generation of Englishmen existed, and Mr. Sadler told the House, detail by detail, of the evils and outrages of the whole abominable system. Excessive hours, low wages, immorality, ill-health—all were enumerated; and then he continued, "Then, in order to keep them awake, to stimulate their exertions, means are made use of to which I shall now advert as a last instance of the degradation to which this system has reduced the manufacturing operatives of this country. Children are beaten with thongs, prepared for the purpose. Yes, the females of this country, no matter whether children or grown up—and I hardly know which is the more disgusting outrage—are beaten, beaten in your free market of labour as you term it, like slaves. The poor wretch is flogged before its companions—flogged, I say, like a dog, by the tyrant overlooker. We speak with execration of the cart-whip of the West Indies, but let us see this night an equal feeling rise against the factory thong of England."

§ 10. *The Evidence of Facts.*

Of course it is needless to say that such an equal feeling did not arise, not, that is, with anything like the cry of horror that arose over negro slavery. The hours of black slaves' labour in our colonies were at that very time carefully limited by law<sup>1</sup> to nine per day for adults, and six for young persons and children, while night work was simply prohibited. But for white slaves no limit was to be fixed, nor was the arm of the law to interfere. Though Sadler's bill was read a second time, and was referred to a committee, nothing much was done. But the evidence given before this committee at length produced some effect. Oastler's tactics of publishing the facts had now been taken up unwittingly by Parliament itself, and the facts given before Sadler's committee were terrible enough to cause a shudder of shame to run through the country. Yet, after all, the shame was only felt by a minority; the nation as a whole was not yet touched. And very soon Mr. Sadler lost his seat in the House of Commons in the election after the great Reform Bill of 1832, and the factory hands were thus left without a parliamentary advocate of any influence. But now a new leader appeared in the person of Lord Ashley, afterwards Earl Shaftesbury, who undertook to bring forward once more the Ten Hours Bill.

But before speaking of Lord Ashley we may pause to look, though only for a moment, at the revelations of slavery brought to light by the Sadler Committee.

In the first place the committee received the satisfactory assurance from one witness that the youngest age at which children were employed was never under five! But from five years onwards it was the custom to employ them from

<sup>1</sup> By the Orders in Council of Nov. 2. 1831.

about five o'clock in the morning till as late as ten o'clock at night, during the whole of which time they were on their feet, with a short interval for dinner. The children were generally cruelly treated, so cruelly that they dare not for their lives be too late at their work in a morning. One witness stated that he had seen children, whose work it was to throw a bunch of ten or twelve cordings across their hand and take them off one at a time, so weary as not to know whether they were at work or not, and going through the mechanical actions without anything in their hands. When they made mistakes in this state of fatigue they were severely beaten by the spinner whom they helped or by the overlooker. Several cases of deaths through such beating and blows were given in evidence. "The children were incapable of performing their day's labour well towards the end of the day : their fate was to be awake by being beaten, and to be kept awake by the same method. At a mill in Duntruin," continued the same man who gave this evidence, "they were kept on the premises by being locked up while at work ; they were locked up in the bothies (sleeping-huts) at night ; they were guarded to their work and guarded back again. There was one bothy for the boys, but that did not hold them all, so there were some of them put into the other bothy along with the girls." Sometimes the elder children tried to escape from such miserable and degraded surroundings. When caught, as they generally were, they were inhumanly flogged, or sent to gaol for breaking their contracts. A case is given of a young woman who was thus put in prison for a year, "brought back after a twelve-month and worked for her meat ; *and she had to pay the expenses that were incurred.* So she worked *two* years for nothing, to indemnify her master for the loss of her time."

§ 11. *English Slavery.*

Here again is the story of a Huddersfield lad who was lame. He lived a good mile from the mill, and it was painful for him to move. "So my brother and sister used out of kindness to take me under each arm, and run with me to the mill, and my legs dragged on the ground in consequence of the pain. I could not walk, and if we were five minutes too late the overlooker would take a strap and beat us till we were black and blue." The worst of it was, the masters in many mills encouraged the overlookers in this kind of brutality. An eye-witness relates, "I have seen them when the master has been standing at one end of the room with the overlookers speaking to him, and he has said, 'Look at those two girls talking,' and has run and beat them the same as they beat soldiers in the barrack yard for deserting." A Leeds girl, who began her mill-work at six years old, and toiled then from five in the morning till nine at night, gives similar evidence. "When the doffers flagged a little or were too late, they were strapped, and those who were last in doffing were constantly strapped, girls as well as boys. I have been strapped severely, and have been hurt by the strap excessively. Sometimes the overlooker got a chain and chained the girls, and strapped them all down the room. The girls have many times had black marks upon their skins." This was in a Yorkshire factory, and not upon a West Indian plantation. But the slaves were white; otherwise there would have been all the difference. That the dreadful exertions produced by this forced labour often caused death from exhaustion among children is obvious. A Keighley overseer in giving evidence told the story of a man who came to him, saying, "'My little

girl is 'dead.' I asked, 'When did she die?'—and he said, 'In the night; and what breaks my heart is this: she went to the mill in the morning, but she was not able to do her work. A little boy said he would help her if she would give him a halfpenny on Saturday, but at night when the child went home, perhaps about a quarter of a mile, she fell down several times on the road through exhaustion, till at length she reached her door with difficulty. She never spoke audibly afterwards, she died in the night.'" Tragedies like this, told in such simple, common-place words, happened in not a few homes, or instead of death a maimed and miserable life of ill-health and disease was slowly dragged along till the grave gave a merciful release. One might give a long list of them, and of various forms of torture inflicted on children not daring to resist, but in this tender age one is not allowed to harrow even the feelings of a reader. Yet we may perhaps be allowed to quote one more case from a speech of Richard Oastler's. "I will not picture fiction to you," this brave reformer said in the early days of the factory movement; "but I will tell you what I have seen. Take a little female captive, six or seven years old; she shall rise from her bed at four in the morning of a cold winter day, but before she rises she wakes perhaps half-a-dozen times, and says, Father, is it time? Father, is it time? And at last when she gets up and puts her little bits of rags upon her weary limbs, weary yet with the last day's work, she leaves her parents in their bed, for their labour (if they have any) is not required so early. She trudges alone through rain and snow, and mire and darkness, to the mill, and there for thirteen, fourteen, sixteen, seventeen, or even eighteen hours, is she obliged to work, with only thirty minutes' interval for meals and play. Homeward again at

night she would go, when she was able, but many a time she hid herself in the wool in the mill, as she had not strength to go. And if she were one moment behind the appointed time, if the bell had ceased to ring when she arrived with trembling, shivering, weary limbs at the factory door, there stood a monster in human form, and as she passed he lashed her. This," he continued, holding up an overlooker's strap, "is no fiction! it was hard at work in this town last week. The girl I am speaking of died; but she dragged on that dreadful existence for several years."

§ 12. *Lord Ashley and the Act of 1833.*

It was evidence like this, which he afterwards corroborated from his own experience, that induced Lord Ashley to take up the cause of Factory Reform. The Select Committee of Mr. Sadler in 1832 was followed by another, designed to gain delay for the manufacturers; in 1833, but the second only strengthened the facts of the first. By incessant labour and indefatigable care Lord Ashley, assisted by the Report of the Commissioners to the effect that "a case is made out for the interference of the Legislature," brought in a Bill which was read a second time on June 17th, 1833. This was a Ten Hours Bill for women and young persons. Needless to say it was violently opposed, both in and out of Parliament, the most strenuous among its opposers being, unfortunately, men like Richard Cobden and John Bright, whose political economy (being what it was) seems in this case to have got the better of their humanity. Lord Althorp finally introduced a Government Bill, which, though falling very far short of Lord Ashley's and Oastler's ideal, yet did

a certain amount of good.<sup>1</sup> It aimed, as far as possible, at the very lowest limit of interference with the interests of the manufacturers, and was arranged so as to come into operation very gradually. But in many cases it was rendered almost useless by the fact that manufacturers might act as justices, and punish offences against the Act committed by members of their own body. Naturally the punishments were few and slight, while infractions of the Act were numerous and frequent. The limit of age for children, whether nine or twelve years, was frequently evaded, and wholesale misrepresentations were made by masters and parents.

Moreover the ingenuity of profit-seekers discovered other ways of evading the law. The legal working day for young people was now fixed between the hours of 5.30 a.m. and 8.30 p.m., and to keep their machines going the whole time employers had recourse to a system of relays, which commenced work at different times of the day, and which did not work at the same time as the relays of children, so that exceedingly complicated arrangements had to be made to fit in the different times of leaving off and beginning work; the arrangements for meal-times were also fixed irregularly for different groups of workers, and the working-time of any individual was altered to suit such arrangements. The real result of all this carefully-elaborated re-arrangement was such a confusion of complication throughout any given mill that it was next to impossible to prevent infractions of the Act, and that was what the employers wished. The factory inspectors declared unanimously that no legal restrictions on the time of labour could now be enforced

<sup>1</sup> Its provisions were, (1) Nine years limit of age, except in silk mills; (2) Nine hours day, *with exceptions*, for children under thirteen. No provision for adults, young people, or children over thirteen years.

against the master's will. In many cases children under thirteen were dismissed, and their places taken by others a year or so older, whom the law could not protect, and whom consequently an unscrupulous employer could overwork as much as he liked.

§ 13. *The Ten Hours Agitation continued.*

Consequently the Ten Hours Agitation had to be kept up, or rather to be begun all over again. The relief of the younger children was paid for by the extra labour of those between thirteen and eighteen, who now often had to perform a double task. Moreover, the law was often openly disregarded with impunity. Richard Oastler therefore began his campaign out of Parliament afresh. "Short time" committees were re-constituted once more in the chief Yorkshire towns; a series of letters were sent to the papers by Oastler and his friends—men like G. S. Bull, the Vicar of Bierley, near Bradford, and John Wood, the Bradford manufacturer—and great enthusiasm and excitement was again roused among the working-classes of the North. The cry "Yorkshire slavery still exists" again went forth; and therewith went a renewed determination to abolish it. Public meetings were again held with fresh vigour, and at one of them a document was produced, which proved conclusively that a disguised form of traffic in children for sale to mill-work was still being carried on.<sup>1</sup> At length, in June 1836, on a motion by Charles Hindley, M.P., the Government promised to do their best to compel obedience to the Factory Acts. Nevertheless, it was found

<sup>1</sup> Speech of Rev. J. R. Stephens, Wesleyan minister, at Manchester, March 1836. The document is for the "hire" of ten children for three years: and is dated Feb. 9th.



almost impossible to gain convictions under them, owing to the active opposition of the magistrates, who often simply refused to enforce the law. One magistrate at Blackburn calmly dismissed complainants with the remark: "Oh, that is Oastler's law; we have nothing to do with it. Take your complaints to him." But public meetings went on outside Parliament, and Lord Ashley attacked the question once more inside Parliament (1838-40), in spite of many defeats, with untiring energy and determination; and popular feeling, apart from the working-classes themselves, was growing more and more strongly on his side. As an instance of Lord Ashley's exertions in the cause of the mill-hands, and the brutality of some employers, we may mention a case in which a young woman, employed in a mill at Stockport, had been caught by the machinery, whirled round and dashed to the floor with her legs broken and all her body mutilated. It will scarcely be credited by those not acquainted with similar facts of more so that years, but it is none the less true, that her master made to of giving any compensation for her fearful injuring work; one and sixpence from her wages for the period irregularly week as yet unexpired when the accident. time of any It is some comfort, however, to learn that <sup>£</sup>s. The real took up the case, prosecuted the mill-owner, a judgement was a verdict of <sup>£</sup>100 damages for the girl, and <sup>£</sup>6y given mill expenses on both sides. But this is only a solitions of the of his exertions. Not satisfied with reports shed. The evidence, he made personal tours in the fact no legal re- in towns like Manchester, Leeds, Bolton and be enforced and saw with his own eyes the evils of the system. He refused office in 1841 because <sup>pt in silk mills;</sup> thirteen. No decided views of Sir Robert Peel on the question <sup>teen years.</sup>

as all reformers do, opprobrium, contempt and misrepresentation, from interested people like the late John Bright ;<sup>1</sup> he was distrusted by his associates in the work, even by Oastler, because of his Parliamentary tactics ; yet in spite of all he went on slowly, surely, and undeterred.

§ 14. *Imprisonment of Oastler.*

But, meanwhile, a great blow occurred to the reformers outside Parliament. Their hero and champion, Richard Oastler, was suddenly cast into the Fleet Prison. The facts were these. He was employed by T. Thornhill of Riddlesworth, in Norfolk, as steward of his large estates in Yorkshire, as his father had been before him. His employer agreed with him largely in his views on the factory question, and did not object to his work as a reformer. He even introduced him to people of rank, like the Duke of Wellington, Earl Grey the Premier, and others, until a question arose about the introduction of the New Poor Law into the Halifax and Huddersfield districts. The Poor Law Commissioners found that Oastler's influence was so strong there that they had considerable difficulty in enforcing the law, as he seems to have objected to it. The upshot was that as Oastler would not promise to aid the Commissioners, Mr. Thornhill dismissed him in May 1838. Now during his stewardship Oastler had incurred various expenses—chiefly in keeping up the position necessary to the representative of a gentleman of fortune—which had necessitated his borrowing money to pay the annual balances due to his employer. Finding this extremely unpleasant, he offered to resign his stewardship in 1834, but Mr. Thornhill would not accept his resignation, and he continued in his office on the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Hodder's Life*, ii. 22, 27, 130.

understanding that his salary should be increased from £300 to £500 per annum, and out of this increase he should annually reduce his debt. There had grown a balance of some £2000 against him during his fourteen years' work as steward. This arrangement was regarded as mutually satisfactory till, suddenly, Mr. Thornhill, being vexed at a placard commenting on Oastler's dismissal—a placard in which it must be admitted that Oastler had no share—issued a writ against his former steward for the remainder of his debt, now only £500. This was two years after his dismissal, and during those two years Oastler had been living almost entirely on charity. "The only money I have," he writes to a friend in November 1840, "comes by letters—sometimes a five-pound-note, sometimes a ten, sometimes a twenty—but from whom, except in two instances, I know no more than you." Of course he could not pay his debt, and was accordingly committed to the Fleet Prison, that curious institution so familiar to readers of *Pickwick*.

#### § 15. *Oastler's Release.*

Undaunted by imprisonment, Oastler proceeded to issue from his enforced seclusion—which does not seem to have been very severe, except that it kept him within walls—a weekly journal called *The Fleet Papers*, devoted to the discussion of factory and poor-law questions. In the Fleet he saw his friends daily, and one of them gives an amusing account of a "public breakfast" given by "The Factory King." "The apartment," he writes, "is not large. The Monarch for once made his bed his throne; I was honoured with the chair of state; the friend from Huddersfield attended to the tea-kettle and coffee-pots; the gallant captain

[a French refugee cavalry-officer] took command of the egg-department, and there was an appointed purveyor of ham and bread-and-butter, all of the best quality." Amid this mild Bohemianism Oastler lived and worked cheerfully till his friends—including John Walter of the *Times*, W. B. Ferrand, M.P., John Fielden, M.P., and many another name well known in the great factory fight—got up an "Oastler Liberation Fund," and at length a sum was subscribed or guaranteed from which the debt, interest, costs, and expenses, amounting to over £3000, were fully paid (1844). Oastler had been in prison four years. His public entry into Huddersfield soon after his release was an event even yet remembered by many a Yorkshire factory hand. For miles round the town the roads were thronged with people eager to greet their liberated champion with music and banners and processions. Thousands followed his carriage, cheering, singing and shouting in an excited welcome. It was a prelude to his final victory.

§ 16. *Victory at last.*

But that victory was slow in coming. Meeting after meeting was held in the country, debate after debate in Parliament, but the Ten Hours Day had not yet dawned upon the factory children. Meanwhile, the attention of the public was turned towards other forms of employment. Lord Ashley, in his unremitting labours on behalf of the oppressed and unknown, had made the whole country shudder with his exposure of the incredibly disgraceful and brutal abuses of the coal-mines of England. By his efforts the Children's Employment Commissioners of 1842 and 1843 had published terrible revelations as to the treatment of children in industries as yet untouched by law..

And now even the manufacturers could no longer delude the public into non-interference. In 1844 a Factory Act was passed, reducing children's labour in textile factories, and adult females as well as young persons were protected.<sup>1</sup> Then at last the labours of Oastler and Lord Ashley were rewarded by seeing the success of the Ten Hours Act<sup>2</sup> of 1847. Lord Ashley himself had lost his seat in Parliament, but the Bill was introduced by Mr. Fielden, and after a short but sharp opposition, headed by Sir Robert Peel and supported by the manufacturing interest, it was carried successfully, and received the royal assent. At last the old factory song had come true—the song that had been sung by thousands of children in the crowded streets of the factory towns, that had echoed over many a Yorkshire moor, whose loneliness was startled by some great public gathering; the song that fathers had muttered sternly and desperately to themselves as they saw their little ones ground down by a remorseless Mammon; the song that Oastler and his friends had given the best years of their lives to make a reality had come true at last:

“ We will have the Ten Hours Bill,  
That we will, that we will ! ”

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<sup>1</sup> The Act 7 Vict. c. 15 (1844). It provided, (1) Children from eight to thirteen years of age, not to be employed in textile industries more than six and a half hours in one day, or ten hours on alternate days; (2) In case of young persons the day was to be ten hours; (3) School instruction to be provided during time when children were not in factories; (4) Adult women under same rules as young persons; (5) Same meal-time for all protected persons, and no work after 4.30 p.m. on Saturdays.

<sup>2</sup> The Act 10 Vict. c. 29 provided, (1) A Ten Hours Day for women and young persons; (2) Fixed legal day as any ten hours between 5.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. Later on (1850), owing to the abuse of the relay system by manufacturers, a *uniform* working day was fixed—from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an hour and a half for meals, and work for protected persons. to cease after 2 p.m. on Saturday.

§ 17. *Oastler's Death.*

So now at last Richard Oastler saw the fruits of the labours and sacrifices of so many years. That was for him enough. His work did not bring him the honours which most men desire ; on the contrary, it brought only an old age of poverty and retirement. His very name is unrecorded in many modern volumes which profess to give biographies of men distinguished above their fellows, and probably in due course it will be entirely forgotten. "The noblest of all martyrdoms," it is said, "is that of an old age impoverished by the generous sacrifices of youth." Such an old age Oastler passed, dwelling in seclusion in a small cottage at Guildford in Surrey, where he delighted to tend his garden, and receive the visits of those friends by whose side he had fought through so many stormy years. It was a great change from the activity and pleasant position of the inmate of Fixby Hall, but he accepted his lot with unflinching cheerfulness and serenity. His much-loved wife, the mainstay of his life's work, had died soon after his release from the Fleet, and lay buried in a Yorkshire churchyard (1845). He survived her for many lonely years, and then at length the old "Factory King," as his admirers lovingly called him, entered into his eternal rest (1861) at the age of seventy-two. Of him, more than of many a reformer of far greater fame, could it be truly said : "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

## II. LORD SHAFTESBURY.

§ 1. *More Abuses.*

BUT it must not be thought that with the Factory Act of 1847 the work of Lord Ashley and other philanthropists was at an end. There remained much to be done, work of which indeed that Act was only the first forerunner. The same fight had to be waged over and over again in nearly every trade in the country, and a record of Lord Shaftesbury's life is in itself record of the deliverance of the feeble and oppressed in every branch of industry. Few people to-day can realize the awful and abominable amount of cruelty and degradation that existed in the England of thirty or fifty years ago. Fewer still realize how much exists among us now. It was Lord Ashley's task to shed a piercing ray of light upon the places of darkness, and "the cruel habitations" of the earth, and then to call upon the nation in no uncertain voice to wipe away these foul blots upon the veneered surface of modern civilization. In the limits set before me it is impossible to do more than mention the industries in which he saved children, youths, maidens, and women from the most horrible and debasing surroundings—in calico-printing works, in mines, in lace-works, in potteries, in the hosiery trade, in millinery and dress-making, in agriculture, in almost every department of English industry. But it may do some good if one gives an example of the abominations that went on in the England of our fathers, in order that people may see into what depths of degradation humanity is capable of descending when unchecked by religion, public opinion, or even Acts of Parliament.

§ 2. *English Coal-mines.*

In 1842 the country was horrified by reports as to the conditions of working in mines and collieries. A Commission of inquiry was instituted, and irrefutable proofs of these reports were disclosed by it. It was shown that a very large proportion of the workers underground were less than thirteen years old, and most of them began work at about eight years, and some even as low as four or five. Men and women, girls and boys, were all alike employed underground; and very often they were below during the whole week; and never saw the light except on Sunday. The men did the hewing of the coal, but the work of transporting the coals from the men's workings to the shaft was performed by women, girls, and boys. "Hurrying," that is loading small waggons with coals, and pulling or pushing them along the underground passages, was an especially barbarous labour. Those who did it had to crawl on hands and feet, with an enormous weight of coals in a truck either before or behind them, along passages as narrow and wet as common sewers. Boys and girls performed this duty as beasts of burden, either by being regularly harnessed to the waggons by straps, or wearing a girdle round their waists, to which was attached a chain passing between the legs. Thus, panting and straining at their loads, these unfortunate creatures stumbled or crawled through the darkness of passages too low and narrow for a pony to work in, and with blistered sides, chafed limbs, and aching backs, toiled throughout eighteen or even thirty-six hours continually. In addition to this cruel labour these boys and girls suffered terribly from the cruelty of the overlookers, or of the miners whom they



helped, being beaten and punished in the most brutal manner. "Education was totally neglected and the morals of the mining population were in the lowest possible state. Nor can this be wondered at, when it is remembered that in the pits men habitually worked in a state of perfect nakedness, and in this state were assisted in their labours by females of all ages, from girls of six years old to women of twenty-one, these women themselves being quite naked down to the waist, their only garment being trousers."

### § 3. *Degradation of English Labour.*

Such was the state of things among the miners of England when Lord Ashley took up their cause, and so shocking were the revelations made before the Royal Commission then appointed, that the country would permit of no delay in passing a Bill to prohibit women and children from working in coal-pits; which indeed was carried the same year. But into whatever branch of industry we turn at this period the same horrible pictures meet our eyes. In the cutleries of Sheffield, in the potteries of Staffordshire, in the mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire, slavery, cruelty, vice, and ignorance held their sway unchecked. Even in the agricultural districts, the system of employing at certain seasons gangs of workers—men, women and children—got up and superintended by a contractor, had produced lamentable results, and here again sexual immorality and cruelty to children were of usual and common occurrence. Truly, in the earlier half of this century, the Industrial Revolution, whether in the factory or in the field, had brought the English labourer, and still more his children, little cause for gratitude.

§ 4. *Lord Shaftesbury's Early Life.*

That their position has been largely ameliorated is due to one man, not indeed entirely, but still in a pre-eminent degree. We cannot now go through all the various struggles of Lord Ashley in the many branches of his reforming work, and must content ourselves with a brief glance at the reformer himself. Generally one is able, in the surroundings of such a man, to discern some influence of parentage or position that has helped to shape his later life and work. In Lord Ashley's case it was not so. His parents were both active and busy people, but their activity was directed mainly in the paths of social life and pleasures. The amusements, the cares, the opinions, the whole tone of his home, were almost directly opposed to the tenor of his after life. It seems to have been to an old housekeeper, a simple-minded and Christian woman, that Shaftesbury owed that deep religious feeling, and that pious and evangelical tendency which coloured all his later actions. The hereditary home of the family was at St. Giles's at Wimborne, in Dorset, an old manor-house, filled with family traditions from the days of Henry VI., and even of the first Edward. But this he did not see till later; and when he was only seven years old (1808)<sup>1</sup> he was sent from his birthplace in London to a school at the Manor House, Chiswick; a private school, such as the British parent still favours, and, like most private and public schools of that day, of the most inefficient and disgraceful type. Even in his old age he used to say: "I think there never was such a wicked school before or since. The place was bad, wicked, filthy, and the treatment was starvation

<sup>1</sup> He was born April 28th, 1801, at 24 Grosvenor Square.

and cruelty." Here he remained, in much tribulation, till he was sent at the age of twelve to Harrow, and placed in the house of the head-master, Dr. Butler. Harrow and its surroundings helped to dispel the gloomy influences of Chiswick, and now, too, he experienced the delights of country life at St. Giles's, to which his father had succeeded as sixth Earl of Shaftesbury in 1811. But it was at Harrow that the drunken funeral of a deserted pauper happened to turn his mind towards questions which ultimately led him in the direction of social reform. It did not bear fruit, however, till some time later; and when, in 1819, he entered as an undergraduate at Christ Church, Oxford, he used to accuse himself of "the besetting sin of idleness." But, on going up to Oxford, he certainly does not seem to have allowed his "besetting sin" to overcome him, for we find him three years later taking a first-class in classics.

Then, leaving his University with a good degree, he entered Parliament at the age of twenty-five as member for the borough of Woodstock. His career for the future had not yet been definitely shaped. He was a Conservative, a follower of the party led by Canning and Lord Liverpool; but he was no servile follower, and in several ways showed considerable political independence. During this time he became a great personal friend of the Duke of Wellington, and frequently visited him at Strathfieldsaye, nor is it too much to suppose that some portion of the stern perseverance of the Iron Duke was absorbed by the spirit of the young member for Woodstock. And, young as he was, his qualities were sufficiently admired for Canning to offer him (in 1827) a place in his administration, an honour, however, which Lord Ashley declined, chiefly, it seems, owing to his own low estimate of himself, which he frequently expresses

in his diary. "Why am I so weak and useless?" he exclaims; "why cannot I utter one word of eloquence or manliness?"

§ 5. *His Work as a Reformer.*

But, at length, though not in haste, his life-work came to him. He had been devoted to science, then to literature and languages, a student of Welsh and Hebrew, and a dabbler in astronomy; but other things were before him. The subject of the barbarous treatment of lunatics had been brought before Parliament by Robert Gordon, and on that subject Lord Ashley made his first important speech (1828). From that day forward his energies and sympathies were mainly devoted to the cause of social reform, sometimes in public life and in Parliament, and often in private acts of unknown charity. Just at this period, moreover, as if to stimulate and encourage him on his new path, he had the singular good fortune to marry a good and beautiful woman, whose sympathy was to cheer him throughout the vicissitudes and oppositions of an active public life. His wife was Emily, daughter of the fifth Earl Cowper, and the marriage took place in the summer of 1830. Very soon afterwards he contested successfully the county of Dorset; and now amid the storms of the Reform Bill and of labour movements, he began to carve out that independent career as a social reformer that earned for him the title, given sometimes in gratitude and often in scorn, of the Working-man's Friend. In 1833 he became, as we saw, the acknowledged Parliamentary leader of the Factory Movement, and by so doing he came, as his biographer so aptly puts it, to the parting of the ways. "On the one hand lay ease, influence, promotion, and troops of friends; on the other an unpopular

cause, unceasing labour amidst every kind of opposition, perpetual worry and anxiety, estrangement of friends, annihilation of leisure, and a life amongst the poor. It was between these he had to choose." How well he chose, and how nobly he adhered to his choice, is known now to all men. Nor is it too much to say that to this choice the England of to-day owes probably more than in our generation she has owed to any single man.

### § 6. *His Life and Work.*

It is not within our scope to follow him through all the works of reform that are associated with his name ; nay, it is almost impossible, for to do so would be to catalogue all the philanthropic movements of the last half-century. Still less is it within our province to dilate upon his religious views ; views which, however great unpopularity they brought upon him, were as firm as they were sincere. "An evangelical of the evangelicals," as he was bitterly called by his enemies, and as he cheerfully and proudly called himself, he went through life with a perfect and simple faith, that had much of grandeur in its very simplicity. "Do what is right, and trust in God for the rest," was his constant motto ; and from that principle he never swerved. He made mistakes, and sometimes he judged others rather harshly ; yet few men have inspired the great masses of the people with a more unfailing confidence and love. "When the ear heard him it blessed him, and when the eye saw him it gave witness to him ; because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help him." And when he ceased from his labours, and at last was laid to rest, the cry of mourning that arose was the sudden sobbing of a whole nation in grief. He was buried

in the churchyard of his ancestral home of St. Giles's, having come to the end of a long life, "simply an old man who endeavoured to do his duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call him." For so he spoke of himself in all humility, and yet no greater meed of praise can any man hope to give him.<sup>1</sup>

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### III. ROBERT OWEN.

#### § 1. *Early Life. Shop-assistant and Mill-owner.*

WE have already mentioned in passing a part of the work done by Robert Owen in factory reform ; and now, although he died before either Oastler or Shaftesbury, we may look upon him as the connecting bond between the philanthropists we have already discussed and the more modern socialistic school represented in one form by Charles Kingsley. So, disregarding chronological order, we may mention briefly here the main facts of Robert Owen's life as a reformer. He was born in 1771 at Newtown in North Wales, his father being a saddler and ironmonger. Of schooling he had very little, for at the early age of ten he was sent off to London to be an assistant in a draper's shop, but found very soon a similar position at Stamford in Lincolnshire, where his master was a shrewd yet not unkindly Scotchman, who had begun life as a pedlar with

<sup>1</sup> He died on October 1, 1885, having held the title of seventh Earl of Shaftesbury since his father's death in 1851. Speaking upon a political question in 1885 the Duke of Argyll declared : "The social reforms of the last century have not been mainly due to the Liberal party. [He might have said, to any party]. They had been due to the influence, character, and perseverance of one man—Lord Shaftesbury."

a few shillings and a basket. Here he stayed some time, till at length he bettered himself by going back to London, where, as a shop-assistant in a draper's on old London Bridge, he thought himself "rich and independent" on £25 a year with board and lodging. Next he got £40 a year at a first-class house in St. Anne's Square, Manchester, where he remained till he was eighteen, and then, with the modest capital of £100 which he had borrowed from his brother, he went into partnership with a man called Jones, who had some new ideas about making wire bonnet frames. But Jones seems to have been an unbusinesslike person, and Owen soon left him and started as a manufacturer on his own account, and was ere long making £300 a year at cotton-spinning. The improvements he introduced into this department of industry soon gave him a good reputation in and around Manchester, and after one or two connections with other firms, he became a manager and partner in the Chorlton Twist Company. It was this company that took over the cotton mills started by Dale & Arkwright at New Lanark in 1784, and shortly after marrying Mr. Dale's daughter, Owen took up his residence there as manager. Here he at once began, as we saw (p. 117), to carry out various schemes of philanthropy among the workers—both children and adults—collected in the little village round the mills. He entered upon his duties as manager on the first day of the year 1800, so that his work as a social reformer may be said to have begun definitely with the present century. He paid special attention to education, especially of the young, as a means of social improvement, and was one of the first founders of infant schools. He arranged stores and shops for supplying his workpeople with the best goods at the lowest cost, and thus began in a

small way a scheme which saw its fruition—very largely due to his own later efforts—in the present co-operative movement.

§ 2. *New Lanark.*

People are fond of saying that philanthropy does not pay; and, indeed, very often it does not. But Robert Owen showed that philanthropy and profit were, at any rate at New Lanark, by no means incompatible. At the same time he did not care to get a sufficiently high rate of profit to please his partners and shareholders, and the upshot of it was that he severed his connection with them, bought the works, and started them as a new concern, in which not more than five per cent profit should be expected or demanded. This was in 1813, and among his partners were Jeremy Bentham and William Allen the Quaker. He now felt more at liberty to carry out his various schemes for the benefit of his workpeople; he took, as we have seen, an active interest in factory legislation; and his mills became noted throughout England and Scotland for the humane and careful manner in which they were conducted. Not only social reformers, but statesmen and royal personages, like the Czar Nicholas of Russia, made pilgrimages to New Lanark to see the good work he had accomplished. They found healthy and contented workpeople, with children well-taught and well-trained; they found sexual immorality an extreme rarity and drunkenness non-existent; and, moreover, they found the mills working profitably as a sound commercial success. How was it then, it may well be asked, that Robert Owen found himself (in 1828) at fifty-seven years of age compelled to leave his work there, and turn out into the world, no longer as a flourishing man of business, but as a poverty-stricken socialist?



### § 3. *His Social Views. Industrial Communities.*

The answer is to be found in the opposition, no doubt sincere and well-meaning, of his Quaker partner, to what were called Owen's "infidel teachings." The facts were that Owen had never had any settled religious views, and had published a work, the *New View of Society, or Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character* (1812), in which he put forward views obnoxious to many well-meaning people. He believed, for instance, that man was not responsible for his religious beliefs, nor were these under a man's own control. In regard to many other questions, especially as to the nature of the Deity, he was an Agnostic. Unfortunately for him, people at that time could not distinguish between agnostics and "infidels," and he found the whole of the religious world against him. He had to leave New Lanark, and became an agitator busy with many new ideas and futile schemes. It was by these paths that he became what is now called a Socialist. His Socialism had already come out in a report to the Committee of the House of Commons (1817) upon the Poor Law; for Owen, in view of the deep distress among the working-classes in the early part of this century, due to the first effects of the Industrial Revolution, recommended therein, as a measure of relief, the formation of social communities of some 1200 persons on lands of about 1000 or 1500 hundred acres in extent. The persons composing these communities were to live in one large building, with public kitchens and mess-rooms, but with separate private living-rooms for each family, while work and payment was to be in common, under supervision by qualified persons. Such a community was founded later by M. Godin, in the Familistère of Guise, and, as all co-

operators know, has been a great success. But Robert Owen's own scheme failed. Although his plans were received with favour, and many people of high rank—such as our Queen's father, the Duke of Kent—countenanced them, the practical application of them was unfortunate. One community was founded in 1825 at Orbiston, near Glasgow, under the direction of Abram Combe, and another was formed by Owen himself in 1824 at New Harmony, Indiana, U.S.A., but both collapsed after a very short existence. Most of Owen's money had been sunk in the American community; and the failure of this, coupled with his resignation from New Lanark, made him a poor man.

#### § 4. *Socialism and Secularism. Ideal Societies.*

He now settled in London, and became engaged in a very active propaganda of socialism and secularism. His secularist views excited much opposition, not only to himself, but to the causes with which he was identified; and added to this, most of his social schemes proved to be failures. In 1832 he founded a Labour Exchange, whose "notes" for work done were to supersede the use of money. In 1835 he formed the "Association of all Classes of all Nations" to discuss social questions; and it was in connection with this society that the word "Socialism" is said to have been first used in its present sense. Then came more communistic experiments, one at Ralahine, in county Clare, Ireland (1831-5), and another, known as Queenwood (1839), at Tytherly, in Hampshire. As usual, both failed, though it must be said that Ralahine had in it the elements of success, and lasted for three years and a half, being only ruined because its proprietor took to gambling and was sold out. In fact, of all his schemes, the only one that has lasted

successfully down to our own day was that of Co-operation. The present gigantic Co-operative Movement owes very much to the work of Owen, though not by any means to him exclusively; and it owes still more to the fact that it recognizes present practical conditions, and works in and among them. The main fault of Owen's schemes was that they sought to build up, apart from the world as it is, a new and ideal society, free from the evils of the present day. Such ideal societies have never succeeded, and such ready-made socialism must inevitably fail. However much we recognize (with Owen) that the environment moulds the individual, we must recognize just as fully that the individual also influences his environment. The individual may in time—probably in a very long time—be materially improved by modifying his surroundings, and a good many of the surroundings of the present day require considerable modification from a social point of view. But, after all, we must begin with the individual as well, for till he is altered both socially, physically, and morally, little else can be done.

Robert Owen died in 1858 at the advanced age of eighty-seven years. He began as a pure philanthropist and ended as a socialist. His belief that man is the product of inherited capacities and external circumstances, early associations and social environment, led him to insist very truly upon careful education of the young, and upon the importance of ethical training generally. In this direction we of to-day owe him much, as we do to all pioneers, and it is as a pioneer that posterity will chiefly regard him.

## NOTES ON AUTHORITIES.

1. (For the Factory Movement generally, and Richard Oastler's work in particular), *The History of the Factory Movement*, in two volumes, by "Alfred": (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co.: 1857.)
2. *English Factory Legislation*, by Von Plener, gives an analysis of all the most important Acts.
3. *The Industrial Revolution*, by Arnold Toynbee (London: Rivingtons: 1887).
4. (For Lord Shaftesbury's work), *The Life of Lord Shaftesbury*, by Edwin Hodder, in three volumes (London: Cassell: 1887).
5. (For Robert Owen's work), *The Life, Times, and Labours of Robert Owen*, by Lloyd Jones (London: Sonnenschein: 1890).
6. (For the whole period generally), *The Industrial History of England*, pp. 143—210 (London: Methuen: 1891 edition).
7. *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*, by F. Engels (Leipzig: 1845), is accurate in its facts, though passionate in tone.
8. The Blue Books from 1802—1847 on employment in factories, mines, and workshops are indispensable.



CHARLES KINGSLEY.



## CHARLES KINGSLEY AND THE CHRISTIAN SOCIALISTS.

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### § 1. *Kingsley's Early Life.*

WHILE Robert Owen was still living and working at factory reform in New Lanark, there was born in a little country vicarage far away in the south of England, just under the brow of Dartmoor, another "socialist," who was destined to mould men's minds with far more effectual power than the cotton manufacturer of the north. Charles Kingsley was born on June 12, 1819, while his father was vicar of Holne in Devon. He was the child of somewhat remarkable parents, his father being a man of undoubted ability, but unfortunately "a man with every talent except that of using his talents:" while, on the other hand, his mother, born in the West Indies, was a woman of rare strength of character, full of imagination and enthusiasm, to whom her son owed much of that fine humour and love of science and travel that is so characteristic of him. They were all destined to leave Devonshire before the boy was more than a few years old, for his father was transferred to the living of Barnack in Nottinghamshire, near that Fen district which the novelist paints so gloriously and so lovingly in some of the finest



descriptive portions of his *Hereward the Wake* and *Prose Idylls*. But again the family was to change, this time back once more to the Devon that Kingsley loved so well, to that little fishing village of Clovelly (1830), which has since become historic. There he felt the strangely mingled sadness and glamour of the sea, and of the fisher life which inspired the truly noble poem of *The Three Fishers*.

§ 2. *The Lesson of the Bristol Riots.*

Next year the boy was sent to school at Clifton, near Bristol, where there is still a college; and in Bristol there came to him the first inkling of what was afterwards to be the greatest work of his life. Many years after, in 1858, when speaking in that town, he said: "It was in this very city of Bristol that I received my first lesson in what is now called social science; and yet, alas! ten years elapsed before I could even spell out that lesson, although it had been written for me, as well as for all England, in letters of flame from one end of the country to the other." That lesson was given in the shape of the Bristol Riots (Oct. 29—31, 1831), which took place on the occasion of the entrance of Sir Charles Wetherell, the Recorder, into the city, he being known as an opponent of the Reform Bill. Nearly five hundred people were killed in the collisions which took place between the citizens and the military. From Clifton Charles was sent to Helston Grammar School, where one hears much of his strong, active and fearless disposition, his love of nature and of out-door life, his keen interest in all healthy out-door sports. But once more his father was transferred, and the quiet country living by the sea-side was given up for the busy world of a London suburban parish, that of Chelsea (1836).

§ 3. *At Cambridge.*

Thus the young man of nineteen came to the great world of London. He continued his studies at King's College, but soon went up to Cambridge (1838), and entered at Magdalene, where he gained a scholarship, and distinguished himself by hard work both in classics and mathematics. While yet an undergraduate, ardent and impulsive, he met during a visit at Ipsden, in Oxfordshire, his future wife, and love at first sight proved for him no disillusioned dream. Years and years afterwards he declared that the day he first met her was his real wedding-day. But back to Cambridge he went, and there lived a busy intellectual and physical life. Religious doubts were forcing themselves upon him, and giving him many a pang of gloom; the pressure of college work was over him; his leisure hours were filled with boating and other sports. Yet amid all he found time to read some of Carlyle's fierce declamations upon the evils of the day, and declares: "I am utterly delighted with them," speaking of Carlyle as "that old Hebrew prophet who goes to prince and beggar, and who says, 'If you do this or that you shall go to hell'—not the hell that priests talk of, but a hell upon this earth." There was a certain grimness in this way of putting it that has a frequent re-echo in passages of Kingsley's own works. But now-a-days we are too humane to believe in a hell, and consequently hardly inclined to believe very much in a heaven.

§ 4. *Curate and Rector of Eversley.*

Kingsley came out senior optime in mathematics, and in the first class in classics—a double distinction, somewhat rarer now, for we fear to overload the budding undergraduate mind with too much Greek, and do not expect a classical

man to be a mathematician. He went down from Cambridge in 1842, and read for Holy Orders, soon afterwards taking a curacy at Eversley, near the borders of old Windsor Forest, a rough country parish, full of poachers, and empty of religion, but a parish just fitted for a man like Kingsley, who did his pastoral work like a messenger of Christ, and yet could swing a flail with the threshers, or turn a swathe with the mowers as well as any labourer amongst them, and knew as much about hunting and turnips as any ordinary squire or farmer in his flock. Yet in the midst of all his work he had a deep trial and sorrow, a separation from her to whom he had given his heart in keeping, but whom he knew that as a penniless curate he could not marry. His prospects were dark, almost hopeless, and for a time he was in despair. Yet before a year was out he had obtained a better curacy at Blandford, in a few months more (January, 1844) was married to Miss Grenfell, and, before the year was out, had returned to Eversley (where the living had suddenly fallen vacant), no longer as curate, but as rector, called thither by the efforts of the parishioners themselves, who, rough as they were, had appreciated more than he guessed the work he had already done. And so this year, 1844, with the double fortune of marriage and promotion in the Church, became the turning-point of Kingsley's life. He entered heartily and fully into parochial work, as indeed he had ever done, but now with a new zest and earnestness resulting from his happy domestic life and more authoritative position. And the work of the country parish led him to look into the hardships and difficulties of the agricultural life of that day—a day when hardly one grown-up person among the agricultural labourers could read or write, and when boys and girls alike escaped as early as

they could from the village school—where cobbling, teaching, and flogging went on indiscriminately—into the hard work of the fields. Among such a population, ignorant and barbarous indeed, yet not so through any fault of their own, he spent all his time, hardly ever dropping his parish work except for a few hours' fishing. All the while he was learning the lesson of social and industrial knowledge that he soon began so powerfully and impressively to preach. As yet his life went on peacefully, with little beyond events of domestic interest to stir it. But the birth of his eldest son in 1847, and the fact that the child was named after its godfather, Frederick Denison Maurice, reminds us of the influence that Maurice was exercising over the minds of thoughtful men like Kingsley at this time.

#### § 5. *Frederick Denison Maurice.*

For if Charles Kingsley was the exponent, Frederick Maurice was the founder, of Christian Socialism in England. Maurice was, like Kingsley, a Cambridge man, born in 1805, and a student at Trinity Hall, where he obtained a first-class in civil law in 1827. After doing some literary work in London, and being for some time editor of the *Athenæum*, he decided to enter the ministry of the Church of England. With this object he went to Oxford and took a classical course, and was ordained in 1834. After a short spell of country parish work he was appointed chaplain of Guy's Hospital, and became thenceforward "a sensible factor in the intellectual and social life of London." He also became later a Professor of History and Literature, and subsequently of Divinity, at King's College; but in 1853 was deprived of these offices for publishing in his *Theological Essays* opinions on the subject of eternal punishment which did

not commend themselves to the College. But in 1866 he was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, and held that post till his death in 1872. For nine years (1860-69) he was vicar of St. Peter's, Vere Street, but had no parish attached to his church. Hence he had all the more time for social work, and became identified with two important educational institutions—the Working-Men's College, and the Queen's College for Women. He gave eager support to the Christian Socialist schemes of co-operative production and to other forms of co-operation, and if his fame as a social reformer is obscured by his reputation as a "Broad Churchman," it is perhaps because his views were in advance of his age.

Kingsley's own view of social questions, and who was to solve them, was coloured very largely by his inherited predisposition towards the upper classes. These indeed he considered to be the true leaders of the people. A peer and a dean seemed to him to be the persons most fitted to discharge such an office, and it is curious to trace this belief of his to the hereditary traditions of his family. The descendant, on his father's side, of a race of country squires, and, on his mother's, of West-Indian planters, he was hardly the man to agree to the theory that the only leader of the people is the people itself. Yet he had a passionate sympathy for the poor and weak, and became through many a stormy day of good and evil report their speaker, guide and protector.

#### § 6. *Eversley Rectory and the Rector.*

But as yet he continued to look on at the stirring events of the time from the quiet seclusion of Eversley Rectory. A beautiful description of that rich home life is given by one

of his friends at this time: "The picturesque, bow-windowed rectory rises to memory as it stood with its doors and windows open on certain hot summer days; the sloping bank with its great fir-tree; the garden—a gravel sweep before the drawing-room and dining-room, and a grass-plot before the study, hedged off from the walk—and the tall, active figure of the Rector tramping up and down one or the other. The manuscript of the book he was writing lay open upon a rough standing-desk, which was merely a shelf projecting from the wall; his pupil, treated like his own son, was working in the dining-room; his guests perhaps lounging on the lawn, or reading in the study. He would work himself into a sort of white heat over his book, till, too excited to write more, he would calm himself down with a pipe, pacing his grass-plot in thought with long strides. He was a great smoker, and tobacco was to him a needful sedative. During his afternoon walks he would visit one or another of his very scattered hamlets or single cottages on the heaths, and those who have read *My Winter Garden* know how he loved the moor under all its aspects, and the great groves of firs.

"Nothing was more real than Kingsley's visiting. He believed absolutely in the message he bore to the poor, and in the health his ministrations conveyed to their souls; but he was at the same time a zealous sanitary reformer, and cared for their bodies also. I was with him once when he visited a sick man suffering from fever. The atmosphere of the little ground-floor bedroom was horrible; but before the Rector said a word he ran up-stairs, and, to the great astonishment of the inhabitants of the cottage, bored with a large auger he had brought with him, several holes above the sick man's head for ventilation." One can still imagine

the tall and spare Rector, with his sinewy, rather than powerful frame, his swarthy complexion and piercing eye, hurrying about his parish, ever eager and active, ever doing some kindly action for his people. For kindness was the greatest ingredient in his nature ; it kept in check his quick temper, which, though hot, was under rigid control, and through it shone the essential tenderness, love, and gentleness of his manly disposition.

§ 7. *The Chartist Agitation.*

Thus for awhile he watched the great stream of modern history rolling past him afar off, till at length came news of the Chartist rising, and Kingsley could contain himself no longer, but went up to London to take his share in the work. This was in 1848, the year in which the great Chartist Movement, which had been gathering force for the past ten years, culminated, and then collapsed. The Reform Bill of 1832, much though it did, especially when compared with the state of things before its enactment, had left the working-classes of the country dissatisfied. They felt that not they, but the middle classes, had gained most by it. Accordingly, in 1838, six members of the House of Commons held a conference with some deputies of the Working-Men's Association, and produced a "Charter," which demanded these six points—Annual Parliaments, Universal Suffrage, Voting by Ballot, the Abolition of property qualification for Members of Parliament, Payment of Members, and Equal Electoral districts. As we look back upon them now, these demands seem almost ludicrously moderate, compared with the extraordinary excitement which they produced, both among supporters and opponents. But people were not yet used to the methods of democratic

politics : and when monster meetings were held, and much strong language was used, the whole affair was taken with the utmost seriousness. Collisions with the police and military occurred, and created bad feeling. Huge petitions were got up amid wild enthusiasm ; new newspapers were started, with what seemed then a tremendous circulation ; and of one of them—*The Northern Star*—the well-known Feargus O'Connor became editor. In 1840 the National Charter Association was inaugurated at Manchester with 400 sister societies, and some 40,000 members. The Chartists stood by themselves, for all efforts at coalition with the moderate Radicals of that day failed, and their sympathy with the Parisian revolutionaries of 1848 caused them to be suspected of the wildest tendencies. It was a time of much distress among the working-classes, and excitement in their ranks became intense. There were agitations and risings at Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Manchester among the manufacturing population, and everybody seemed to fear an outbreak of unusual violence. Then a great demonstration was announced to be held in London on April 10th, 1848, at Kennington Common. A monster procession was to be formed to present the petition for the Six Points of the Charter to Parliament. Owing to the fear of violence, this procession was forbidden by the Government, and the Duke of Wellington, who was called upon to defend London, took military precautions of an amusingly elaborate nature.

But, like many other demonstrations, the Chartist procession collapsed. Only 50,000 people assembled at Kennington Common. O'Connor and Ernest Jones, their leaders, did not conduct the procession to the Houses of Parliament ; and though the Monster Petition was presented, the whole affair fell miserably flat. Indeed, it had been



taken altogether too seriously, and if it had occurred to-day, would have met with the same good-natured indifference that is accorded impartially to the annual meetings of the National Liberal Federation or the Union of Conservative Associations by the mass of the people, who, after all, do not care much for politics.

§ 8. "*Parson Lot's*" *Papers*.

But in those days such indifference was impossible. The year 1848 was a period of revolution in continental countries, and many men, including Charles Kingsley, feared that revolution might occur among the working-classes at home. The Rector of Eversley preached to his people on the political and social disturbances of the day; and then, when the news of the Chartist demonstration came to his quiet country parish, he could no longer remain at home, but rushed up to London to see what was going on. The tenth of April, as we can see from his hurried letters to his wife, was a day of the most intense mental excitement to him. He sat up till four in the morning, writing placards under the auspices of his friend and leader, Maurice. These placards, written in the fever of those excited April days, were followed by a number of tracts on questions of the day, and by a periodical entitled *Politics for the People*. It is a curious fact that the contributors to this paper were nearly all University men, clergymen of the Church of England, London barristers, and men of science; and though a short-lived publication, it was remarkable in many ways. A few letters from working-men were admitted, but the feeling that "the natural leaders of the people were a peer and a dean," was perhaps a characteristic of its general tone. The most interesting contribution for us is the series

of *Letters to the Chartists*, written by Charles Kingsley, under the name of "Parson Lot." Strangely enough, they were interpreted by his contemporaries of his own class as being of the most violent and revolutionary character. As a matter of fact, they were a series of constant exhortations to abstain not only from actual violence, but even from many legislative reforms, till the working-classes should be fit to receive them. "Be wise, and then you will be free, for then you will be *fit* to be free," are the concluding words of his first placard, and the whole of his subsequent teaching and writing was directed to guiding men in the paths of true wisdom in social difficulties. The error of the Chartists, he says, consisted in imagining that legislative reform was social reform, or that man's heart can be changed by 'Act of Parliament. His own error consisted in underrating the effects of social legislation upon social conditions. One might say that he believed more in the modification of the individual than of his environment, or rather overlooked the immense influence of the environment upon the individual. We must recognize the necessity of reform in both cases if we are to produce any lasting result. At the same time we cannot recognize too fully, or emphasize too strongly, the absolute necessity of the doctrine of self-reformation of the individual presented by Kingsley, especially as at this time the other side of the case, the possibility of entire reform by 'Act of Parliament, is so frequently presented to us. To-day, as much as ever, are Kingsley's words of warning true: "God will only reform society on condition of our reforming every man his own self, while the devil is quite ready to help us to mend the laws and the Parliament, earth and heaven, without ever starting such an impertinent and 'personal' request, as that a man should mend himself."

## § 9. 'Yeast.'

It was while he was thus teaching the working-classes that he was writing his first novel, *Yeast*, the most sympathetic and accurate sketch of the English agricultural labourer that had ever appeared. It came out monthly during the autumn of 1848 in *Fraser's Magazine*; and we may look upon it as stating pretty clearly his own views on social questions at that epoch. Chaotic and somewhat uncertain these were in some respects; but the book was written "with his heart's blood," and declared one main truth with no uncertainty at all—the belief that "the ancient creed, the Eternal Gospel, will stand and conquer, and prove its might in this age, as it has in every other for 1800 years, by claiming and subduing and organizing those young anarchic forces, which now, unconscious of their parentage, rebel against Him to whom they owe their being." But, while thus holding this belief with all the fervid assurance of God's overruling providence in human affairs that is so strong a characteristic of him, Kingsley did not hesitate to declare the state of the country to be ominous, or to speak of the economic conditions of society as utterly rotten and confused. To what end it all tended he hardly knew, but he had fears for the very worst. "If the signs of the times mean anything," he says, "they portend a somewhat mysterious and mythical *dénouement* to this very age. Why should not this age, as all other like it have done, end in a cataclysm, and a prodigy and a mystery?"

The cataclysm has not come, but it has only been averted by measures which men in the days of 1848 would have called socialistic, and by the recognition of the rights of working-men to act for themselves, and to have a larger

share in the government of their state. What Kingsley's views were about the rights of the mass of the people may be seen from the speech of his hero, Lancelot Smith, in *Yeast*: "If a man living in civilized society has one right which he can demand, it is this, that the State which exists by his labour shall enable him to develop, or at least not to hinder his developing, his whole faculties to the very utmost, however lofty that may be. While a man who might be an author remains a spade-drudge, or a journeyman while he has capacities for a master, while any man able to rise in life remains by social circumstances lower than he is willing to place himself, that man has a right to complain of the State's injustice and neglect." And again: "It did strike him that the few might possibly be made for the many, and not the many for the few, and that property was made for man, and not man for property." But apart from any such mere statements of views, *Yeast* presents a truly marvellous picture of the agricultural labourer; marvellous because it is so true, startling because it is so real. The description of his daily labour in the fields, his miserable and filthy and overcrowded home, his dull and sodden amusements, his hopelessness and lurking savagery—all are drawn in painfully livid colours. Yet even in drawing this picture Kingsley had hope, for he had a very living faith in a divine purpose underlying all things; and when, some years afterwards, he wrote a preface to a second edition of his novel (1859), he seemed to think that much improvement had already been made.

§ 10. '*Alton Locke*.'

Meanwhile, his reformer's spirit soon found fresh ground on which to work. Turning from the fields to the city, he

was horrified at the disclosures about the sweating system among working tailors that had come under his notice during his active work in London. The year 1849 was a cholera year, both in London and in the country; and Kingsley worked incessantly in both town and country to promote the cause of sanitary reform, to get at least pure water and fresh air for the people. All the while *Alton Locke* was taking shape amidst his other work, and in 1850 was ready. But the author had enormous difficulty in finding a publisher for it. Messrs Parker, who had issued *Yeast* and *Politics for the People*, thought their reputation was suffering by these outspoken books, and would have no more. Thomas Carlyle came to the rescue, and gave Kingsley an introduction to Messrs Chapman and Hall, who brought it out. But now Kingsley was to feel the wrath of the privileged classes whom he had ventured to warn of their shortcomings. The press, and especially the religious press, received *Alton Locke* either with scorn or bitter animosity. But yet the nobler minds of the day appreciated its truth and honesty of purpose, and the artisans who read it received it with joy as a true picture of their class and their conditions of life. "Containing more faults, sweeping accusations, and hasty conclusions than any of his writings," says one critic, "it is yet his greatest poem, and his grandest sermon." Carlyle called it crude, but found in it "everywhere a certain wild intensity, which holds the reader fast as by a spell." Many people identified Kingsley's thoughts with those of his hero in his most bitter moments, and looked upon the Rector of Eversley not only as a disgrace to his Church, but as a destroyer of society. They could not understand the great thought which underlies the whole book; the thought expressed by the hero

looking back upon the bitter strife and wild remedies in which he had once had hope : " For my part, I seem to have learnt that the only thing to regenerate the world is not more of any system, good or bad, but simply more of the Spirit of God." That is the keynote of Christian Socialism.

### § 11. *Kingsley and his Opponents.*

Charles Kingsley was soon to find how greatly he was misunderstood. A blow came upon him when he least expected it. The Christian Socialists as a body had now attracted considerable attention, and " Parson Lot's " tract on *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*, in which Kingsley denounced the sweating system, and those who by buying cheap clothes supported it, had already become famous. Frederick Maurice and some other London clergymen organized in 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition, a series of lectures and sermons on social questions. Kingsley was naturally invited to join in the series, and arranged to give a sermon on "The Message of the Church to the Labouring Men." The sermon was to be given with the full permission of the incumbent, Mr. Drew, and on its delivery was listened to with profound attention by a large congregation. In one part of his discourse Kingsley uttered the following outspoken words : " I assert that the business for which God sends a Christian priest into a Christian nation is to preach and practise liberty, equality, and brotherhood, in the fullest, deepest, widest, simplest meaning of those great words ; that, in as far as he so does, he is a true priest, doing his Lord's will, and with his Lord's blessing on him. All systems of society which favour the accumulation of capital in a few hands, which oust the masses from the soil which

their forefathers possessed of old, which reduce them to the level of serfs and day-labourers, living on wages and on alms, which crush them down with debt, or in any wise degrade and enslave them, or deny them a permanent stake in the commonwealth, are contrary to the kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed."

No sooner had this sermon ended than the incumbent of the church in which it was preached stood up and declared that, while he agreed with much that had been said, it was his duty to add that he believed much of it to be dangerous and untrue. Naturally, this produced immense excitement in the congregation. Kingsley said nothing, but gave the blessing with deepened solemnity, and left the pulpit. He returned to his home at Eversley exhausted and depressed.

The note of opposition thus once sounded, soon became louder and louder. A leading daily paper attacked the preacher; he was called in derision and anger "The Apostle of Socialism"; the Bishop of London in a hasty moment, without knowing all the facts of the case, forbade him to preach in London. To a man of Kingsley's temperament, such attacks were more than he could bear. Quite exhausted with work and controversy, he had to go to the Rhineland for a complete change. His "storm and stress" period was upon him; and though it was coming to a close, the end of it had been the hardest of all.

### § 12. *His Work and Social Views.*

After that storm there came a calm. His next great book, *Hypatia*, did not touch the social problems of his own age, but none the less he was working at them with undiminished energy. But literary denunciation was laid aside for the practical work of sanitary reform, the better housing of the

working-classes, and the promotion of co-operation. One of his pupils, Mr. Martineau, states the gradual change very well. "In later years he gradually modified or abandoned his democratic opinions, thereby, of course, drawing down upon himself the charge of inconsistency from those who considered that he had deserted them. To me, looking back at what he was when he wrote *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*, the change seems rather the natural development of his mind and character under more or less altered circumstances, partly because he saw the world about him really improving, partly because by experience he found society and other existing institutions more full of healthy life, more willing to be taught, more available as instruments of good than he had formerly thought. But at that time (about 1850) in his books and pamphlets, and often in his familiar daily speech, he was pouring out the whole force of his eager passionate heart in wrath and indignation against starvation wages, stifling workshops, reeking alleys, careless landlords, roofless and crowded cottages, hard and canting religion. His *Poacher's Widow* is a piercing, heart-rending cry to heaven for vengeance against the oppressor. 'There is a righteous God,' is its burden, 'and such things cannot and shall not remain to deface the world which He has made. Laws, constitutions, are none of His if they tolerate such; they are accursed, and must perish—destroy what they may in their fall. Nay, they *will* perish in their own corruption.'

§ 13. *The Christian Socialists and Co-operation.*

This fierceness of spirit abated in later years, but the natural intensity of Charles Kingsley found its vent in practical work. To him, and to his friends Maurice and



Thomas Hughes, the co-operative movement, as we know it to-day, owes much of its success. The Christian Socialists did not take it up at first altogether in the form in which it had been started by the Rochdale pioneers of 1844. They sought to establish productive co-operative workshops, organized labour associations, with co-operation instead of competition as their motto. Associations of this kind had been set on foot in Paris, and Mr. Ludlow, a friend of Kingsley and Maurice, had visited them to see something of their working. The Christian Socialists started them in London, the Tailors' Association being a direct outcome of *Alton Locke*; and a new publication, the *Christian Socialist*, was set up in order "to diffuse the principles of co-operation by the practical application of Christianity to the purposes of trade and industry." But opposition was fierce and bitter. The Christian Socialist movement and all connected therewith were fiercely attacked, both in the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*, who regarded socialism and communism as identical, and displayed the usual ignorance and bitterness that is accorded by "respectable" people to any new scheme for the self-improvement of the working-classes. Of course such attacks made no difference in Kingsley. "The Co-operative movement entirely approved itself to his conscience and judgment, and mastered him so that he was ready to risk whatever had to be risked in fighting its battles." He was in 1852 a cordial supporter of co-operative work in London, though his parish duties prevented him from helping personally; and although, as every one knows, these first co-operative associations for production failed, Kingsley never wavered in his belief in the general principle of association. The success of the movement on its distributive side, and recent new developments of co-operative

production, have more than justified that belief. A letter of his to Mr. J. Nichols in 1856 puts the whole question in a nutshell: "Association," Kingsley declares, "will be the next form of industrial development, I doubt not, for production; but it will require two generations of previous training, both in morality and in drill, to make the workman capable of it. Association for distribution is what I look to with far higher hope. I am sure, for example, that if the method of the People's Stores and Mills at Rochdale were generally carried out, the saving to wages, to public honesty, and (considering the present adulteration of goods) to public health, would be immense." And the sum of the whole matter is grandly stated in another letter of Kingsley's, containing these words: "Now as for any schemes of Maurice's or mine—it is a slight matter whether they have failed or not. The failure of a hundred schemes would not alter my conviction. For it is my belief that not self-interest but self-sacrifice is the only law upon which human society can be grounded with any hope of prosperity or permanence."

#### § 14. *Kingsley as a Sanitary Reformer.*

Not only as a promoter of the co-operative movement, but as a sanitary reformer, Kingsley's influence has borne lasting results. We have already mentioned that the summer of 1849 was particularly unhealthy. Cholera was prevalent in many parts of England. The progress of the epidemic roused all Kingsley's eager activity. He began a crusade against dirt and bad drainage; and one may use the word crusade very appropriately in his case, for he had all the fervour, religious and physical, all the eagerness and all the impatience of the crusaders of the middle ages. The terrible

revelations about the London water-supply that came to light in this year, disgusted and sickened him indeed, but made him all the more eager to be up and doing. He went up to London again, and in October (1849) went over the cholera districts of Bermondsey. "Oh God! what I saw!" he writes to his wife; "people having no water to drink—hundreds of them—but the water of the common sewer, which stagnated, full of dead fish, cats and dogs, under their windows. At the time cholera was raging Walsh saw them throwing untold horrors into the ditch, and then dipping the water out and *drinking it!!* And, mind, these not dirty debauched Irish, but honest, hard-working artisans. It is most pathetic to see the poor souls struggle for cleanliness, to see how they scrub and polish their little scrap of pavement, and then go through the house, and see '*society*' leaving at the back poison and filth such as would drive a lady mad with disgust in twenty-four hours. Oh, that I had the tongue of Saint James to plead for these poor fellows! to tell what I saw myself, to stir up some rich men to go and rescue them from the tyranny of the small, shop-keeping landlords, who get their rents out of the flesh and blood of these men." Well might Kingsley wish for the tongue of an apostle to expose such abominations; the pity of it is that they are exposed over and over again, and no one cares, and the landlord draws his rent as usual.

§ 15. *The Housing of the Poor.*

It is nearly fifty years ago since the reformer exclaimed, "Do not let them wait for committee meetings and investigations. While they will be maundering about vested interests and such-like, the people are dying." It is nearly fifty years ago, and how little has been done! Rookeries

and slums exist in large numbers, not in London only, but in every large and small town, and many a country labourer's cottage is in no better plight. The vested interests are very strong, and the majority of the population are very callous. Kingsley wished that "one-tenth part of the money which has been spent in increasing, by mistaken benevolence, the cruelties of the slave trade, had been spent in buying up these nests of typhus, consumption, and cholera, and rebuilding them into habitations fit, I do not say for civilized Englishmen—that would be too much!—but for hogs even." His wish shows very plainly how conservative he was with all his so-called socialism. He would give money to the owners, who got their rents, as he himself puts it, out of the flesh and blood of these men; where modern socialists would say outright (and one cannot blame them either) that men who so abused their rights as owners of property deserved no compensation at all. This view seemed never to strike Kingsley. He exclaimed angrily: "Why are you so confoundedly merciful and tender-hearted? Do you actually fancy you can talk those landlords into repentance? Are men capable of repentance who will go on doing what they have been doing?" But his own class instincts prevented him from taking the standpoint of a modern socialist reformer: and, of course, all the views of scientific socialists about the ownership of land would have revolted Kingsley's mind and feelings altogether.

#### § 16. *Importance of Sanitary Science.*

As years went on the eagerness for sanitary reform, which he showed so keenly in Bermondsey and elsewhere in 1849, increased rather than diminished. He devoted more and more of his time, thought, and influence to it—and his

influence had become very considerable since the days of *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*. He had become one of her Majesty's chaplains (1859), and Professor of Modern History at Cambridge (1860), and in 1861 was invited to give private instruction to the Prince of Wales. The increased influence that these honours brought him he used abundantly in the cause of sanitary science—in the publication of the laws of health, in the deliverance of men's bodies and homes from disease and dirt, and, by so doing, helping on their deliverance from the usual consequences of drunkenness, vice and poverty. These became in his eyes more important than any political reforms. But perhaps the most striking example of his eager urging on of sanitary reform was when he preached a sermon on "National Sorrows and National Lessons," at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, on the day of thanksgiving for the recovery of the Prince of Wales from fever, and in the course of his sermon hoped that the Prince's illness would "awaken all loyal citizens to demand and enforce a sanitary reform in town and country, immediate, wholesale, imperative." Since those eager words were spoken, much has been done, but much more yet remains. On this point, as on many others of social importance, Kingsley was too hopeful.

§ 17. *Kingsley on Woman and her Mission.*

One more question remains with which we have not yet dealt, namely, Kingsley's views of women and women's work. On the great "woman question," that has caused so much acrimonious, ignorant, and absolutely foolish controversy, he spoke with no uncertain voice. Many modern sentimentalists would call him brutal. "Man is a sexual animal," said Kingsley boldly, in a letter on the subject. This fact

is constantly ignored by modern disputants, by men as well as women, and those who allude to it, be it ever so delicately, are called brutal and indecent. Nevertheless, the fact is there, and there is no getting over it. People may believe Genesis or not, as they please, but the words "male and female created He them," express a physical fact and a general principle, which, independently of Genesis, is verified in the person of each one of us. Not being subject to mental hysteria or false delicacy, Kingsley was able to perceive and state these facts clearly, and his letter to John Stuart Mill on "Woman's Rights" forms an admirable commentary upon the whole subject. The sum and substance of it is, that medical education of women is the only phase of the woman's rights movement which he could support, but this he supported cordially and sympathetically. The whole question is summed up in two sentences. "I object," he says, "to the question of woman's right to vote or to labour, and above all, to woman's right to practise as physicians and surgeons, being mixed up with social, *i. e.* sexual, questions. Of woman's right to be a medical practitioner, I hold that it is perhaps the most important social question hanging over us." There is a profound truth in the statement made by Kingsley, that the strength of the movement "lies not in the abnormal, but in the normal type of womanhood," and that "any sound reformation of the relations between woman and man must proceed from women who have fulfilled well their relations as they now exist." At the same time, Kingsley admits that these relations are imperfect and unjust, and declares that "wherever man and wife are really happy together, it is by ignoring and despising, not by asserting, the subordination of women to man." And, as any one can see, whether in *Yeast*, or

*Hypatia*, or *Two Years Ago*, Charles Kingsley thoroughly and earnestly believed that woman was the proper teacher, "the natural, and therefore divine guide, purifier, inspirer of the man." It is a pretty theory; but, judging from the results of some centuries of such guidance and inspiration, man nevertheless seems to reflect little credit on his teacher. Or could it possibly be the teacher's fault? This, however, is heresy.

§ 18. *Kingsley's Characteristics.*

We have endeavoured, very imperfectly, to give some of the main points of Kingsley's social teaching. We have seen that his socialism was of a very mild type, especially in his later years, and hardly corresponds at all to the socialism of to-day. The fact was that Kingsley remained all his life an aristocrat, sympathizing indeed with the wants of the people, but in his heart of hearts abhorring democracy. He looked for the salvation of society to come from its higher ranks, not from its lower. Perhaps he was right, yet neither class seems at present very promising. In any case, Kingsley hated demagogues. Throughout his life, his books and his works, he remained essentially an English country gentleman, with all the special virtues, but also with all the limitations of his type. The best and the truest that can be said of him is that in every vicissitude and department of life he was pre-eminently *a man*; and, after all, as things go now-a-days, that is a high meed of praise. No one has so well summed up his whole career as his friend Max Müller in his recollections of the chamber of death at Eversley Rectory.<sup>1</sup> "One remembered the young curate and the *Saints' Tragedy*; the Chartist parson and *Alton*

<sup>1</sup> Charles Kingsley died on January 23rd, 1875.

*Locke*; the happy poet and the *Sands of Dee*; the brilliant novel-writer and *Hypatia* and *Westward Ho!* the Rector of Eversley and his Village Sermons; the beloved professor at Cambridge, the busy canon at Chester, the powerful preacher at Westminster Abbey. One thought of him by the Berkshire chalk-streams, and on the Devonshire coast, watching the beauty and wisdom of Nature. One saw him in town alleys, preaching the gospel of godliness and cleanliness, while smoking his pipe with soldiers and navvies. But as one looked at him for the last time on earth, one felt that greater than the poet, the professor, the canon, had been the man himself, with his warm heart, his honest purposes, his trust in his friends, his readiness to spend himself, his chivalry and humility, worthy of a better age."

Charles Kingsley's last words were those of the wonderful prayer of the burial service, words which express better than anything less sacred the whole attitude of his mind and soul throughout his busy life: "Thou knowest, O Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not Thy merciful ears to our prayer, but spare us, O Lord most holy, O God most mighty, and suffer us not at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee."



### NOTES ON AUTHORITIES.

1. *Charles Kingsley; his Letters and Memories of his Life*: edited by his wife in two volumes; also (abridged) in one volume (London: Kegan Paul: 1885).
2. Kingsley's novels; especially *Alton Locke*, *Yeast*, and *Two Years Ago* (Macmillan: various editions, from 6d. upwards). The edition of *Alton Locke* with the preface by Thomas Hughes should be read if possible.
3. *Life and Letters of F. D. Maurice*: in two vols. (Macmillan: 1884). There is also a small volume by Colonel Maurice (London: Methuen).
4. *Christian Socialism*: by Rev. M. Kaufmann (London: Sonnenschein: 1888).
5. (For Co-operation) *The Co-operative Movement To-day*: by G. J. Holyoake (London: Methuen), and the same author's larger *History of Co-operation*, in two volumes.

# CARLYLE AND RUSKIN.



# CARLYLE AND RUSKIN.

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## I. THOMAS CARLYLE.

### § 1. *Introductory.*

WE are not keeping strictly to chronological order in taking Carlyle and Ruskin together after Kingsley and the Christian Socialists ; but it is proper to class these two men, so different and yet so alike, by themselves. For the thunders and roarings of Carlyle have united with the calm delicacy of Ruskin to promote an influence for good in the discussion of social questions that is none the less real because it has not been so direct as that of men more prominent as practical social reformers. One is more inclined to look at these two as historian and art-critic ; yet to ignore their reforming influence in modern England would be to fail in recognizing some of the most important factors of social amelioration in the present century. Both Carlyle and Ruskin will live in our history as true prophets, for they have been the two greatest inspirers and awakeners of the mind of England in an age in which the mental and spiritual faculties of our race have sometimes seemed in danger of succumbing to the material.

§ 2. *Carlyle's Early Life and School-mastering.*

The two men were very dissimilar in the circumstances of their birth ; for Carlyle was the son of a poor working-man, a mason, born in an obscure Scotch village ; while Ruskin's father was a comfortable and prosperous merchant, living in a well-to-do district of London. Let us follow Carlyle's career first. He was more than twenty years older than John Ruskin, being born on December 4th, 1795, "in a room inconceivably small," at Ecclefechan, a village in the county of Dumfries, not far from the Border. He was the eldest of the nine children who were born to James Carlyle and his wife ; the father stern, rugged, and taciturn, the mother loving and anxious, but severely pious—yet a woman of whom her son could afterwards say that "with her alone my heart played freely." When the little lad, the Scotch labourer's son, was five years old he was sent to the village school, and when he was nine to Annan Grammar School ; and so eventually to the University of Edinburgh. It was a cold November day in the year 1809 when the young student completed his eighty miles' walk from Ecclefechan to the capital, where he was to be prepared, or to prepare himself, as his father hoped, for the ministry of the Kirk. But the youth never took kindly to this idea. On the other hand Carlyle attained a considerable proficiency in mathematics, which study afterwards enabled him to support himself by earning the dry and bitter bread of a schoolmaster ; and in 1814 a recommendation from his mathematical professor, Leslie, obtained him the honour of being allowed to teach the budding genius of the youth of Annan Academy in return for £70 a year—which, as scholastic appointments go now, was a very fair salary. However, it is satis-

factory to find that this was "a situation flatly contradictory to all ideals or wishes of mine." Still he stuck to school-mastering, not finding anything better to do, and in 1816 obtained another post, as master of a school at Kirkcaldy, on the coast of Fife. The head-master of the Grammar School at this town was Edward Irving, and it was the wish of Carlyle's supporters that Carlyle's school should be a rival institution to the Grammar School. But in Irving, so far from finding a rival, Carlyle found a close and intimate friend, and "but for Irving," he said long after, "I had never known what communion of man with man means." Indeed, Irving's influence was at this time all-important for the young teacher's development. His library took Carlyle away from the arid paths of mathematics to the more human interests of history. And at this time a still more human interest was aroused in Carlyle's heart by his acquaintance with Margaret Gordon, a girl of no ordinary depth of character, who foresaw clearly the gifts and the faults of this young and obscure schoolmaster, and declared to him that "genius will render you great," long before Carlyle had written a line of literature. Perhaps she might have been Carlyle's wife, but the fates decided otherwise, and after a short time she passed out of his life. Many years afterwards he saw her, when she was Lady Bannerman, riding in Hyde Park, "and her eyes (but that was all) said to me almost touchingly, 'Yes, yes, that is you.'"

### § 3. *Struggles and Influences.*

To us now it is perfectly clear that Carlyle would never have succeeded as a schoolmaster, and fortunately he did not. "Some convincing proofs of unpopularity," whatever these may have been, decided his course. He resigned his

post and went to Edinburgh, almost penniless and with few prospects of bettering himself. Here he earned a very scanty income by giving private lessons and translating French pamphlets, living chiefly on monthly rations of oat-meal and butter supplied by his father, who was now the tenant of a small farm at Mainhill, near Ecclefechan. These scanty meals and his often enforced fasts at this time were almost certainly the cause of his future terrible enemy, dyspepsia—without which, however, Carlyle would certainly not have been the man he was. It was a cruel time for the young schoolmaster; but he struggled on and, after a while, found some literary hack-work on the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, for which he wrote some biographical articles. It was poorly paid but helped him to live. An important episode for his development as a social reformer was his visit to Irving at Glasgow, where he was brought face to face with the dangerous discontent of the workmen there, who had to exist in enforced idleness owing to the industrial depression of 1820 and previous years. For, although the great Continental wars of 1795 to 1815 were now over, and Napoleon was removed to his sea-washed prison in the Atlantic, England had by no means yet recovered from the strain of that terrible contest. It is true that the manufacturers and merchants were doing fairly well and pouring a large quantity of English goods into the European markets, but by 1820 the stimulus caused by the declaration of peace had faded away; prices had gone down; and then in 1816 and 1817 a couple of bad harvests, whose effects were accentuated by the old Corn Laws, had caused widespread distress among the working-classes. A commercial crisis followed that reached its culminating point in 1819, and was followed after a few years' recovery by another in 1825.

Such being the state of industrial England, no thinking man could fail to have his mind drawn very largely towards social and industrial problems. Thus, all unconsciously, Carlyle received in his visit to Glasgow impressions and influences that were afterwards to bring forth the "winged words" of his social writings.

§ 4. *Slow Progress.*

Meanwhile he was very miserable. Care, hunger, and sleeplessness tortured him. He was a good deal at his father's farm at Mainhill in 1820 and 1821, and spent much of his time ranging the moors round his home in loneliness and mental misery. But this summer brought a new light into his life, in his acquaintance, through Irving, with Jane Baillie Welsh : and a correspondence sprang up between them, though not at first relating to much more than the girl's studies. But a new era had dawned for Thomas Carlyle, and, like his own Teufelsdröckh, he felt he had at length discomfited the "Everlasting No."

He had for some time studied the German language, and was now sufficiently acquainted with it to read and enjoy its literature, for which he conceived a great enthusiasm, and in especial for the works of Goethe. It was now by translations from this literature that he first became known to the world of books and their makers. His *Life of Schiller* began to appear in the *London Magazine* in 1823, to which periodical Charles Lamb and De Quincey were then contributors. Then came his translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Meanwhile, by Irving's help, he had been asked to become tutor to the three sons of Charles Buller, a retired Anglo-Indian, and lived with that family at Edinburgh, and at their shooting-box in Perthshire. He



went with them to London in June 1823, but soon afterwards gave up his tutorship. Still he remained in London—with the exception of two short excursions to Paris and Birmingham—and saw much of his friend Irving, and something of other notabilities, such as Coleridge and Lamb. But the great influence upon his London life at this time was London itself. As yet, however, he was still only a struggling, though not quite unsuccessful, literary man, whose chief claim to recognition was a thorough sympathy with the spirit of German literature.

#### § 5. *Marriage and Craigenputtock.*

It was in order to proceed with the translation of a new work, *German Romance*, that he now allowed his family to take for him a farm near his father's, called Hoddam Hill; which farm his brother Alexander managed for him while Thomas Carlyle "lived a russet-coated idyll"—writing ten pages of translation every day, and riding or walking over the wide, wild moors. Meanwhile his love for Jane Welsh had ripened till he could withstand it no longer; and at length after many difficulties the two became betrothed, and finally (October 17th, 1826) were married and settled down in Edinburgh, where the young husband hoped to support himself by literary work.

But he had a hard time, and the newly-married pair were often in real want. Luckily, however, Carlyle got some work to do for the *Edinburgh Review*, and also for the new *Foreign Review*, in which journals he was allowed to write to his heart's content upon his pet subject, German literature. At this period he owed much to the kindness of that much-abused editor, Jeffrey, who saw in the new writer the signs of genius, and let him have to a large extent his own way.

The Carlyles now found it necessary to give up the Edinburgh house and settle at Craigenputtock, at the manor of the wife's family, "a lonely farm-house isolated among miles of dreary moorland," in "a solitude altogether Druidical." Here Carlyle still worked at the mines of German literature while his brother Alexander managed the farm; but the great literary event for his career was his connexion with *Fraser's Magazine*, started in February 1830. His first great original work, *Sartor Resartus*, was taking shape, but Fraser would have none of it.

Meanwhile, the farming at Craigenputtock did not succeed. After being reduced to "an available capital of twelve pence in coppers," Carlyle had, for almost the only time in his life, to borrow £50 from his friend Jeffrey; and then departed to London to seek a publisher for *Sartor Resartus*, comforted in his trials by his wife's remark: "My dear, this is a work of genius." Unfortunately no publisher for the work of genius could be found; and after some stay in London, and a brief return to Craigenputtock, whose solitude they found unendurable, the Carlyles took up their abode once more in Edinburgh (1832), and the usual essay-writing continued.

#### § 6. 'Signs of the Times.'

But during this time we find in Carlyle's writings the first notes of the trumpet of social reform that he afterwards blew so loudly. The note was sounded in an essay on Ebenezer Elliott's *Corn Law Rhymes* (1832), and therein we may discern the line of thought that afterwards was to be developed in *Chartism* and *Past and Present*. The thought had already been foreshadowed in the essay on *Signs of the Times* (1829), in which spiritual Dynamics are

contrasted with Mechanics, and the current belief in outward institutions that correspond to no inward impetus or conviction is emphatically denounced. The whole spirit of the age had become, said Carlyle in that Essay,<sup>1</sup> entirely mechanical, even as the system of industry under machinery and in factories. "Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also. . . It is by the mere condition of the machine, by preserving it untouched, or else by reconstructing it, and oiling it anew, that man's salvation as a social being is to be insured and indefinitely promoted." Against this view he protested forcibly, and, as cognate with it, against the merely shopkeeping idea of pure utilitarianism, the mere striking of "a balance of Profit and Loss." It is to spiritual dynamics that he declares man must look for hope, to "the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love and Fear and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry, and Religion—all that have a truly vital and infinite character."

Now, holding such views as these, it is easy to see that Carlyle had little hope of much good resulting from legislative reforms such as the Corn Laws, or from political propaganda such as Chartism. The true reform must proceed from within, not from without, from moral, not mechanical forces. "All reform except a moral one," he remarks in criticizing, not unsympathetically, Ebenezer Elliott's rough *Rhymes*, "will prove unavailing . . . Political reform can indeed root out the weeds, but it leaves the ground *empty*—ready either for noble fruits, or for new worse tares." This is the idea running throughout his writings on social subjects; and it is an idea that we of to-day would do well

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*: vol. xlix., pp. 439—459.

even now to take to heart when discussing the many well-meaning schemes so freely propagated for working out our social salvation. The mere alteration of physical and material conditions may do much, but it cannot do everything. Man cannot live by bread alone now any more than at any other period of his existence. However fine and sweet the bread may be, at howsoever fine a table he may eat it, there is yet something lacking if the great moral forces of his nature are not also roused into activity. It may be that utterances like these are not what people are pleased to call practical, but yet they contain truths without the acceptance of which practical reformers will find that their reforms are in the long run fruitless.

§ 7. *Early Works, and London.*

Between the days of these first signs of Carlyle's increasing interest in social and industrial questions, and the publication of his *Chartism* at the end of 1839, a great many important changes took place in his life. We can only allude to them briefly in this short sketch. We left him and his wife in Edinburgh, where he was still writing for the reviews, but still without a publisher for *Sartor Resartus*. At length, however, Fraser, the proprietor of the magazine called by his name, agreed to bring it out in that periodical, and thus it appeared in instalments in 1833 and '34. It was to all appearances a miserable failure, and even a reprint was not to be thought of. So a modest fifty copies were struck off from the magazine type for personal friends, and thus Diogenes Teufelsdröckh and his quaint Clothes-Philosophy came doubtfully into the world. It must have been a bitter disappointment to the author of his being, but even disappointment such as this did not daunt him. An

impossible attempt to obtain a Professorship of Astronomy at Edinburgh by Jeffrey's influence was frustrated by the perfectly justifiable refusal of Jeffrey to use his influence against a man who had far more knowledge of that subject than Carlyle. This failure, coupled with a small lecture from the great Lord Advocate upon Carlyle's "perverse and foolish affectation of singularity," not perhaps entirely undeserved, decided Carlyle and his wife to leave Scotland, and, in the face of all future risks, to settle down in London. Craigenputtock, which they had again inhabited for a season, was sold off, and one day early in June 1834 they entered into number five Cheyne Row, and dwelt there for the rest of their days.

Being now fairly settled in London, in the society of congenial spirits such as John Stuart Mill, Leigh Hunt, Harriet Martineau, and John Sterling, Thomas Carlyle addressed himself to the great historical task that was at last to make him famous. He wrote the story of the French Revolution, as no man had written it before, or will do hereafter. Of that work he could truly declare to the world: "You have not had for a hundred years any book that comes more direct and flamingly from the heart of a living man." Having completed it (January 1837) he fled to Scotland and to his own people for three good months of restful idleness. He came back to find himself becoming famous, to find the *French Revolution* praised on all sides, to welcome even the hitherto neglected *Sartor Resartus*, at last creeping slowly into notice. He now addressed himself to new tasks, of which a book on Oliver Cromwell was to be one; but while preparing this he felt constrained to utter to the world some thoughts on the great and significant movement, both social and political, that took shape in the Chartist agitation.

§ 8. *Carlyle on Chartism.*

As we have already had occasion to refer to this movement when speaking of Charles Kingsley (p. 162), we need not dilate further upon it, but may proceed to hear at once what Carlyle had to say about this portent. What he had to say was well worth a hearing. The newspapers were rejoicing loudly and proclaiming that "we have put down the Chimera of Chartism," but Carlyle knew well enough that the ideas and forces that it represented were still alive. The living essence had not been put down so long as there still existed, as there did exist, "the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad, the wrong condition therefore, or wrong disposition, of the working-classes of England." What meant this continual discontent of the working-classes? was it reasonable or not? And if it was reasonable, as indeed it seemed to be, then why should we not proceed to find some remedy for it? These questions Carlyle put to himself and the nation; for it seemed to him that the time had come when such questions imperatively demanded an answer, and he at least felt that as far as in him lay it was his duty to try and answer them. The signs of the times had filled him long before with dismay, and almost with despair for the future of England. For it was a time, he had declared, "when, public and private principle (as the word was once understood) having gone out of sight, and self-interest being left to plot and struggle and scramble as it could and would, difficulties had accumulated till they were no longer to be borne, and the spirit that should have fronted and conquered them seemed to have forsaken the world; a time when the Rich, as the utmost they could resolve on, had ceased to govern, and the Poor, in their fast-accumulating numbers and ever-widening com-

o

plexities, had ceased to be able to do without governing. And now the plan of Competition and *Laissez Faire* was on every side approaching its consummation ; and each, bound up in the circle of his own wants and perils, stood grimly distrustful of his neighbour, and the distracted Common Weal was a Common Woe, and to all men it became apparent that the end was drawing nigh.”<sup>1</sup>

### § 9. *The Condition of England.*

As for the general condition of the working-classes, the great “Condition-of-England” question, their degradation and misery had become a bye-word to European nations. A description of the state of the industrial population about 1840, such as that written in such lurid letters by the German Socialist Engels, presents an almost incredible record of starvation, misery, vice, filthiness, and brutality. Four-and-sixpence a week for sixteen hours’ work every day was the lot of the stocking-frame workers of Leicester ;<sup>2</sup> and the misery of which this is an instance was spread far and wide. “At the same time the population was huddled together in the towns in filthy dens like wild animals, and women worked like beasts of burden in the mines. The country labourers were almost worse off than the weavers of the towns ; they famished in their dark hovels—no wonder that the skies were reddened by the flames of burning ricks. Not only was there distress, but there was tumult and anger amongst the people, the like of which we have not seen since.”<sup>2</sup> This last feature was to Carlyle the most ominous of all. The worst of it was that Parliament never found time to

<sup>1</sup> On *Corn Law Rhymes* ; Edin.<sup>\*</sup> Review, vol. lv., pp. 338—361 (1832).

<sup>2</sup> Toynbee, *Industrial Revolution*, pp. 193 and 206.

consider it. Carlyle complained that our legislators never found time to speak on "the Condition-of-England question," and remarked bitterly that they went to Parliament for their own sake, and not for the sake of the nation.

### § 10. *Remedies.*

Certainly, little help was to be got from Parliament. Nor in his *Chartism* does Carlyle hope for a solution from statistics or from a mere study of wages and prices. The principle of the New Poor Law, as being an announcement that whosoever will not work ought not to live, commended itself to some extent to his grim spirit, but it seemed to him "not a noble method" of dealing with the current distress; especially in view of the fact of "the poor man seeking for work and yet unable to find it." As for the doctrines of *laissez faire*, and that the "cash nexus" was the sole bond that need be recognized between master and man, they were simply an abomination unto him. Nor again did Carlyle have any faith in the political panacea of Parliamentary reform, or in the Chartist programme itself. "Reform ministries," he declared, "are as barren as the east wind," and he saw no particular benefit in the universal privilege of sending "the twenty-thousandth part of a master of tongue-fence to the National Palaver." In fact he had little hope in any legislative work, or even in social reform on its material side. A scheme of national education and of systematized emigration seemed to be the only practical outcome of his book, and even in these suggestions he had but little faith. Looking back upon his whole discussion of Chartism, he can only say, "what a black, godless, waste-struggling world in this once merry England do such things betoken!"



§ 11. *Carlyle's chief Teaching.*

It will be seen that Carlyle had not many practical suggestions to offer. But he did what was perhaps better—he preached the doctrine of a moral and ethical change in society. He agreed for instance with the principle of the New Poor Law as above stated, but he wished still more to see the law of “no work, no recompense,” applied to every class. “The law of ‘no work, no recompense’ behoves to be enforced everywhere and rigidly made good,” for “work is the mission of man on this earth.” But *how* this universal law is to be enforced, and how every idler, rich or poor (but especially the rich), is to be made to perform his mission, the prophet does not tell us. The main idea of his philosophy is that man should bow down to his superiors, wherever he finds them, and let a real aristocracy, “a corporation of the best and bravest,” lead him. “Democracy is a self-cancelling business,” he declares: yet after all where is man to find his leaders? If the aristocracy will not lead, what shall the democracy do? May there not be some truth in Arnold Toynbee’s strangely beautiful simile: “Democracy is sudden like the sea, and grows dark with storms and sweeps away many precious things; but, like the sea, it reflects the light of the wide heavens and cleanses the shores of human life”?

§ 12. ‘*Past and Present.*’

His book on *Chartism*, as Emerson had told him, was for Carlyle but a breaking of new ground. “One day,” Emerson assured him, “when the fact is riper, you will read the Second Lesson.” The day came sooner perhaps than either the English or American philosopher expected.

The Chartist riots of 1842, and the great mass of revelations as to the condition of the people which this year brought forward, caused his impatient and eager spirit to break silence once again. And so he sat down and wrote quickly, with a throbbing heart, his great contrast of *Past and Present*. It was published in 1843. The "Past" of Carlyle's England is the England of Joceline de Brake-londe, chronicler of the abbey of St. Edmund's Bury, who wrote, about the end of the twelfth century, a quaint and simple record of his abbey and its doings that had been published by the Camden Society about this time. This picture of twelfth-century society was to be the foil of the state of England in the nineteenth. "It is at once the most tender and pathetic picture of the Past and the most unsparing indictment of the Present that exists in modern English literature."<sup>1</sup> The great contradiction that presented itself to the writer was that England was full of wealth, of multifarious produce, supply for human wants in every kind; "yet England is dying of inanition. . . . So many hundred thousands sit in workhouses; and other hundred thousands have not yet got even workhouses; and in thrifty Scotland itself or Edinburgh City, in their dark lanes, hidden from all but the eye of God, there are scenes of woe and destitution and desolation such as, one may hope, the sun never saw before in the most barbarous regions where men dwelt. . . . Descend where you will into the lower class, in town or country, by what avenue you will, by Factory Inquiries, Agricultural Inquiries, by Revenue Returns, by Mining-Labourer Committees, by opening your own eyes and looking, the same sorrowful result discloses itself; you have to admit that the working body of this rich English

<sup>1</sup> Toynbee, *Industrial Revolution*, p. 193.

Nation has sunk or is fast sinking into a state to which, all sides of it considered, there was literally never any parallel."

§ 13. *Change and Permanence.*

What explanation of these things could be found? Many were ready to give one, but none of them gave Carlyle any satisfaction. Yet there were two facts that he laid hold on as being at the root of our modern evils; they were the want of permanence in industrial society and the acceptance of the cash-nexus as the sole bond between man and man. The Present, with its perpetual coming and going of fresh workmen to new masters, its restless search hither and thither for the shortest cut to wealth, the hurry and stress of modern labour, and the continual striving to get into a different sphere than that in which a man was born—all this was contrasted in Carlyle's mind with the quiet, permanent institutions of the Past, "when men lived together in contentment whole lifetimes, and formed unbroken habits of affection." "Permanence, persistence," he cried, "is the first condition of all fruitfulness in the ways of men." Such conditions existed in the Past. "Gurth was hired for life to Cedric, and Cedric to Gurth. . . . The very horse that is permanent, how much kindlier do his rider and he work, than the temporary one, hired on any hack principle yet known! I am for permanence in all things, at the earliest possible moment, and to the latest possible. Blessed is he that continueth where he is."

In such teaching there was indeed much of truth, and yet permanence is not alone sufficient as a cure. And is it not obvious to remark that if Carlyle had "continued where he was," in Ecclefechan or elsewhere as a penniless usher, he

would probably never have been able to preach his doctrine? Such criticism, however, is captious: there is an abiding suggestiveness of truth in the idea, thrown out almost at random in this same chapter: "A question arises here whether in some ulterior, perhaps not far-distant stage of this Chivalry of Labour, your Master-Worker may not find it possible and needful to grant his workers *permanent interest* in his enterprise and theirs? So that it become, in practical result, what in essential fact and justice it ever is, a joint enterprise." Some such relationship as this, now fortunately in one form or another becoming more and more common, he already foreshadowed in an age when the cry was all for "temporary contracts," and only in the restoration of the old system of permanent employment and stable conditions did he see much hope for the future.

#### § 14. "*Cash-Payment.*"

The second great evil that Carlyle attacked was the principle of "man's duty to man resolving itself into handing him certain metal pieces and then shoving him out of doors. . . . We have profoundly forgotten everywhere that *Cash-payment* is not the sole relation of human beings; we think, nothing doubting, that *it* absolves and liquidates all engagements of man. . . . One thing I do know: never on this earth was the relation of man to man long carried on by Cash-payment alone. Cash never yet paid one man fully his deserts to another, nor could it, nor can it, now or henceforth to the end of the world. In brief, we shall have to dismiss the Cash-Gospel rigourously into its own place: we shall have to know that there is some infinitely deeper Gospel, subsidiary, explanatory, and daily and hourly cor-

rective to the Cash one; or else that the Cash one itself and all others are fast travelling." In place of the Cash-gospel Carlyle would bring back the old order of life when Cedric and Gurth, the master and the man, were bound together as human beings, and not merely as industrial units. He would have the rich mill-owner regard his workpeople as men and women, not merely as "hands"; would have had him guide and protect them, in fact govern and rule them as in times past the rich governed and guided the poor.

#### § 15. *Organization of Industry.*

Such were the guiding ideas of Carlyle's teaching in *Past and Present*. As before, it may be objected that such teaching is lacking in practical result; and yet such a criticism overlooks the deeper influences of the teacher and prophet in stimulating and awakening the thoughts of men who had at heart the welfare of their country, and only needed some such earnest appeal as this to arouse them to their work. And, after all, it is as a stimulator and awakener that Carlyle was chiefly useful to his age: for the only specific remedies that he mentions—such as systematized emigration, national education, and so forth—do not amount to very much. The best and most tangible suggestion he made was that of organization under "Captains of Industry." "All human interests, combined human endeavours, and social growths in this world, have at a certain stage of their development required organizing: and work, the grandest of human interests, does now require it." In winged words like these, Carlyle shadowed forth in succinct outline the true harmony of Socialism and Individualism. He saw the great failure of our present industrial system was its want of

organization, its wild and wasteful anarchy of struggling and conflicting interests. "Can you any more continue to lead a working world unregimented, anarchic?" he asked of the workers and masters of his day. "I answer, and the heavens and earth are now answering, No! The laws of Nature will have themselves fulfilled. That is a thing certain to me." And it is equally certain to any thinking man that the present industrial system cannot continue as it is much longer.

§ 16. *Some Criticisms : Gurth.*

These then are the main lines of teaching in *Past and Present*. Of the book itself, considered as a piece of literature and not as a message from a modern prophet, it is easy to say harsh things. Like all Carlyle's works, it is very wordy and diffuse, and there is much chaff hiding the solid grain. There is the usual exaggeration in his style of writing and speaking, and the usual striving after effect by the use of extraordinary nicknames and similes. His own criticism of a greater man than himself, the poet Goethe, may well be applied to his own work: "Bushels of dust and straw and feathers, with here and there a diamond of the purest water." And there was much truth—though now it is almost heresy to say so—in his old editor Jeffrey's remark: "The great source of your extravagance, and of all that makes your writings intolerable to many and ridiculous to not a few, is not so much any *real* peculiarity of opinions as an unlucky ambition to appear more original than you are." This unlucky ambition never left him, and is often in *Past and Present* painfully apparent. But, after all, these are minor points. The greatest fault in the book is not its style or its want thereof, but a certain absence of any clear

connexion between the world of the nineteenth century and that of Abbot Samson, even as contrasts. Only here and there is the link between them hinted at; it is the contrast that strikes us most. There is a telling passage about Gurth, the swineherd, that will illustrate my meaning. "Gurth, born thrall of Cedric the Saxon, has been greatly pitied by Dryasdust and others. Gurth, with the brass collar round his neck, tending Cedric's pigs in the glades of the wood, is not what I call an exemplar of human felicity; but Gurth with the sky above him, with the free air and tinted bosage and umbrage around him, and in him at least the certainty of supper and social lodgings when he came home—Gurth to me seems happy in comparison with many a Lancashire and Buckinghamshire man in these days, not born thrall of anybody. Gurth's brass collar did not gall him; Cedric *deserved* to be his master. The pigs were Cedric's, but Gurth too would get his parings of them. Gurth had the inexpressible satisfaction of feeling himself related indissolubly, though in a rude brass-collar way, to his fellow-mortals in this earth. He had superiors, inferiors, equals. Gurth is now 'emancipated' long since; has what we call 'liberty.' Liberty, I am told, is a divine thing. But Liberty, when it becomes the 'liberty to die by starvation,' is not so divine!" The contrast between the Saxon swineherd and the Lancashire operative is admirably drawn; but there is no hint of that strange chain of circumstances that led to Gurth's modern transformation.

### § 17. *Closing Years.*

We have here no space to dwell upon Carlyle's later days, though after writing *Past and Present* he had still nearly

forty years of life before him. We are concerned here only with his teaching as a social reformer, and the story of his other work has been so ably, and so often, told already and can so easily be read in his own words that we need not now repeat it. His quiet life at Chelsea was signalized mainly by the appearance of his historical works, *Oliver Cromwell* (1845), and *Frederick the Great* (1865); and the only great public recognition of his position in English thought and literature was his election as Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh, where he delivered his inaugural address in April 1866. The same month brought him the awful blow of his wife's death. It is not for us to judge between Mrs. Carlyle and her husband. It is evident that they were too nearly alike to help each other much, and the lack of tact so perceptible in the wives of literary men (as of other mortals) was in this case also painfully apparent. Carlyle felt her loss keenly, and perhaps hardly ever recovered from the blow. He had done his best work before her death, and after it there came to him honours which he had never sought. He was offered by Disraeli the Grand Cross of the Bath, and a pension, but wisely declined both, though he accepted (1874) the Prussian order "For Merit." His eightieth birthday (December 4th, 1875) brought him numerous testimonies of the high reputation he had won, not only in England but in Europe, chief among which were the telegram from the literary men of Germany, headed by Leopold von Ranke, a letter from Bismarck and a medallion portrait in gold offered by some English friends and students. He lived a few years longer, and at length, full of years, died quietly at his Chelsea home on February 5th, 1881. But truly he being dead yet speaketh; his influence has impressed his generation with a great moral and ethical power; and when-



ever we think of him his great watch-words of honesty, truth, duty, obedience, and work ring as clearly as of old in our ears. "As a revolutionary or pentecostal power on the sentiments of Englishmen his influence," said Dr. Martineau many years ago, "is perhaps nearly spent, and will descend from the high level of faith to the tranquil honours of literature." The honours of literature undoubtedly have come, yet the truest test of Carlyle's work is that these are the least of his titles to our admiration and respect.

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## II. JOHN RUSKIN.

### § 1. *Carlyle and Ruskin.*

"READ your Carlyle with all your heart, and with the best brain you can give, and you will learn from him first, the eternity of good law, and the need of obedience to it ; then, concerning your own immediate business, you will learn further this ; that the beginning of all good law, and nearly the end of it, is in these two ordinances,—that every man shall do good work for his bread ; and secondly, that every man shall have good bread for his work. But the first of these is the only one you have to think of."

The man who thus lit his torch from the flaming fire of Carlyle's inspiration has come to take a higher place in English literature and in English thought than even his teacher. Yet no name, perhaps, has encountered more hostility from the average middle-class Englishman in the course of his teaching, and no one has obtained so unique a position, while being in so many ways directly opposed to the spirit of his time. He has won his way into public

favour (however much that may be worth), in spite of all antagonisms, by sheer force of greatness of soul and consistency of attitude, by doing and saying what he knew to be right and true, and caring not one whit for the world's opinion of himself. He has been one of the few teachers who have risen in this commercial age to tell us in what true nobility and beauty consist, and to point out what the England of to-day is fast losing—the riches and exceeding fairness of a perfectly simple life. His own lot, indeed, has been cast in favoured places, but he has so used it as to shed over the whole of our modern society, if we care to use it, the light of the lamps of beauty and truth that now so often are waxing dim.

### § 2. *Early Influences.*

His early life was as different from that of his great fellow-teacher Carlyle as possible. He has always been in a position of moderate competence. His father was a rich and worthy merchant, born in Edinburgh, but who had come to London, where, at the time of his son's birth, he was living in Hunter Street, Brunswick Square. John Ruskin was born there on the 8th of February, 1819. The boy was educated privately, and the influence of his parents upon his development was, perhaps, therefore unusually marked. That influence was of the highest type. Of his father he could say with truth, "he was an entirely honest merchant, and his memory is, to all who keep it, dear and helpful." His mother was a woman of great depth of feeling, affectionate, exacting and religious; one to whom her son owes that deep vein of reverence in the highest sense that runs through all his writings. It was she, he tells us, who regularly "drilled" him in the reading and study of the Bible, to whose beauty of language he, like

Carlyle and many another great writer, owes so much. Perhaps one of the deepest influences of this early period of his life was his annual tour round England with his father, who used to spend two months in the summer in going the round of his country customers, not racing through the scenery boxed up in a railway carriage, but drinking it in and enjoying it from the seat of a post-chaise. In these pleasant summer journeys Ruskin became acquainted with "all the high roads, and most of the cross ones, in England and Wales, and great part of Lowland Scotland as far as Perth." Thus early did the boy learn to know and love Nature at her fairest and best, and this love was his first and deepest. "The first thing which I remember," he writes, "as an event in life was being taken by my nurse to the brow of Friar's Crag on Derwentwater. The intense joy, mingled with awe, that I had in looking through the hollows in the mossy roots, over the crag, into the dark lake, has associated itself more or less with all twining roots of trees ever since." And among his "beginnings in life" he counts chiefly the crossing of Shapfell, and going through Glenfarg, near Kinross, on a winter's morning, when the rocks were hung with icicles. With such a love of natural beauty so soon developed, we are not surprised to find an equal love of art, derived again from his father, who "had a rare love of pictures," and "an innate faculty for the discernment of true art," a gift as rare as the mere liking for pictures is common. Even in his twelfth year John Ruskin had successfully copied some of Cruikshank's etchings, and was then allowed to learn drawing; and only two years afterwards he had given to him Roger's poem on *Italy* with vignettes by one Turner, whose genius at once captivated and fascinated his youthful eye. About the same period

the Ruskin family became so charmed with the views in Prout's *Sketches in Flanders and Germany* that they determined to see the real places for themselves, and accordingly in 1833 went on a long tour up the Rhine and over the Alps as far as the great cities of Northern Italy. The artistic impressions derived from this tour were strengthened by another in the next year to Normandy, where the architecture of Abbeville, Rouen, and Rheims contributed the subtle and majestic beauty of centuries of wondrous art in stone to the many other influences that were then shaping Ruskin's character. He was still very young, but even at the age of seventeen he was learning water-colour painting from Copley Fielding, and was defending his favourite Turner from the sneers of magazine critics.

### § 3. *Oxford and Italy.*

In due time Ruskin went up to Oxford, and entered as a gentleman-commoner at Christ Church. The natural and artistic beauties of our greatest University were, for once, not wasted on the undergraduate mind; and Oxford formed another step in the development of his poetic nature. It is a curious fact, however, that Ruskin gained the Newdigate prize for English verse in 1839, an honour which a genuine poet is generally the last to win. Beyond this solitary distinction, he did not have much success in the ordinary academic career. "I never used a crib," he says, "but I believe the Dean would rather I had used fifty than borne the puzzled and hopeless aspect which I presented at the examinations." The cause of this was very largely his weak health, which in 1840 necessitated his being taken by his parents to Italy. But though his journey had this unfortunate origin it was productive of the most

fortunate artistic results, and his time spent among the creations of the greatest masters of painting, sculpture, and architecture resulted in lasting benefit and joy, not only to himself, but to all those whom his artistic teaching has subsequently enriched. He was able to return to Oxford in 1842, and take his degree. He had come of age two years before, and it is characteristic not so much of his love of Turner as of his love of Art, that he celebrated the occasion by buying Turner's 'Harlech.'

§ 4. '*Modern Painters*.'

Nor was it very long before the combined influences of his English and Italian art-training resulted in the production, at the early age of twenty-four, of the initial volume of his first and possibly greatest book, *Modern Painters*. The full title expresses concisely its general purport: it is, "Modern Painters: their Superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to all Ancient Masters proved, &c., by a Graduate of Oxford." The superiority consists in the modern artist's greater faithfulness to Nature, of which faithfulness Turner was the great example. It was left for Turner to interpret Nature properly: "By Shakespeare, humanity was unveiled to you; by Verulam, the principles of nature; and by Turner, her aspect. Of all the three, though not the greatest, Turner was the most unprecedented in his work," for none before him "had lifted the veil from the face of Nature; the majesty of the hills and forests had received no interpretation, and the clouds passed unrecorded from the face of the heavens which they adorned, and of the earth to which they ministered." The young critic's book had a good reception on the whole, but the art critics combated severely his views. It is impossible, however, to go even inci-

mentally into Ruskin's art teaching. We are considering him here as a social reformer, and can only chronicle briefly the appearance of his great works. A residence for some time in Italy resulted in a continuation of *Modern Painters*, of which the second volume appeared in 1846, including criticisms of Italian painters, and up to 1860 three more followed at intervals. In the interim the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851) came out, and already in them we notice the keynote of his social teaching, the central fact of "the dependence of all human work or edifice, for its beauty, on the happy life of the workman," while "the laws of the workman's life, and the dependence of national wealth upon the principles of justice, mercy, and admiration," were taught by his later works, *Unto this Last* (1862), and *Munera Pulveris* (1872).

#### § 5. *The Revelation of Beauty and the Curse of Darkness.*

With this hurried sketch of Ruskin's artistic development we are now more in a position to discuss his views as a social reformer. It is, of course, his main characteristic in this department—a characteristic that is peculiarly his own in social questions—that the foundation of his social teaching is laid in the eternal principles of beauty in Nature and in Art. He has always sought—and sought successfully—"to link his exposition of art with every department of human life and human necessity." His own words about Turner are with but slight modification completely applicable to himself: none before him has lifted the veil from the face of Art and of Nature, and interpreted to men the wide, inevitable laws that rule the Life of Humanity. "In all true works of art," once said Carlyle, "wilt thou discern Eternity looking through Time, the God-like rendered visible:" and

Ruskin says the same when he reveals to us that Art "declares the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God, and tests all work of man by concurrence with or subjection to that."

Well then may it be asked—How does our modern industrial and social system fare when judged by such a test? For in this sense must we regard the teaching of Ruskin on this point. Alas, it fares but badly. "A curse of darkness" has fallen on our hearts and thoughts, and the "myriads imprisoned by the English Minotaur of lust for wealth" are "condemned to live, if it is to be called life, in the labyrinth of black walls and loathsome passages between them, which now fills the valley of the Thames and is called London . . . I beg you," he cries entreatingly and earnestly, "I beg you once for all to understand that unless you are minded to bring yourselves, and all whom you can help, out of this curse of darkness, you need not try to do any art-work—it is the vainest of affectations to try to put beauty into shadows, while all the real things that cast them are left in deformity and pain."

§ 6. *The First Evil of Modern Industry.*

It is the deformity and pain of our modern system against which the heart of this artist rebels. He knows that it betrays a wrong condition of things altogether. "Wherever you see want, or misery, or degradation in this world about you, there, be sure, either industry has been wanting, or industry has been in error." And that our modern industry has been in error to a considerable extent, few who consider the conditions of life in our manufacturing towns, the numbers of our poor and the miserable dwellings of thousands of respectable workpeople, will deny. What,

then, is the cause of all this? The answer is indeed given in many ways by different thinkers; Ruskin states clearly his belief that our present evils result mainly from the utterly mechanical nature of our modern system, which leaves the workman—of whatever grade—no joy in his work; and from a general desire to gain wealth or, for that matter, ordinary wages, without the proper amount of previous toil. Let us state the causes in Ruskin's own words: "It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature even to themselves. . . . It is not that men are ill-fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure. It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but they cannot endure their own; for they feel that the kind of labour to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one, and makes them less than men. Never had the upper classes so much sympathy with the lower, or charity for them, as they have at this day, yet never were they so hated by them." Surely this is a strange and significant sign. Ruskin interprets it truly: "To feel their souls withering within them, unthanked, to find their whole being sunk into an unrecognized abyss, to be counted off into a heap of mechanism, numbered with its wheels and weighed with its hammer-strokes;—this nature bade not—this God blesses not;—this humanity for no long time is able to endure."

This is but another expression of Carlyle's denunciation of the mechanical bond of the cash-nexus between employer and employed. It may be objected that the feeling thus



attributed to the working-classes is exaggerated, and that they are unconscious of such a sentiment about their work. But that a feeling is unconscious and unexpressed is no proof of its non-existence. The labourer and the artisan may not feel it quite in the way Ruskin puts it; but in what he says there is a deep and abiding truth—in our modern industry the mechanism has killed the man. “We manufacture everything except men; we blanch cotton and strengthen steel and refine sugar and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine or to reform a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages.”

§ 7. *The Second Evil.*

That is the first great cause: and the second is the modern dislike of resolute labour—a dislike which has possibly been brought about by the excessive use of machinery and the minute sub-division of labour, that takes away all a man's interest in his work and makes him only long to get done with it as soon as possible and receive his reward. It is the price we have to pay for apparent saving of labour. Ruskin has put it thus: “By far the greater part of the suffering and crime which exists at this moment in civilized Europe, arises simply from people not understanding this truism—not knowing that produce or wealth is eternally connected by the laws of heaven and earth with resolute labour; but hoping in some way to cheat or abrogate this everlasting law of life, and to feed where they have not furrowed, and be warm where they have not woven. I repeat, nearly all our misery and crime result from this one misapprehension. The law of nature is, that a certain quantity of work is necessary to produce a certain quantity of good, of any kind whatever. If you want know-

ledge, you must toil for it ; if food, you must toil for it ; and if pleasure, you must toil for it. But men do not acknowledge this law, or strive to evade it, hoping to get their knowledge and food and pleasure for nothing ; and in this effort they either fail of getting them, and remain ignorant and miserable, or they obtain them by making other men work for their benefit ; and then they are tyrants and robbers." These last words are an outspoken, and by no means a solitary, denunciation of men who live in idleness on other people's labour—of which there are far too many in our modern society, just as old Sir Thomas More declared long ago there were in the society of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

### § 8. *Organization of Industry.*

Having thus seen the two main causes of the misery and evils of to-day, we naturally ask, What remedies has Ruskin suggested for their cure ? To many the answer will be disappointing. It is the same answer as was given by Carlyle ; that social reform must begin with the internal and moral reform of the individual, and need not be looked for, or expected from any mechanical reconstruction of society. It does not seem very tangible, and it is very hard to put into practice ; but till that reform is begun no other is even possible. Of course, however, Ruskin does not ignore improvements that might be made by legislative action, or by an alteration in the condition of man's material surroundings. He even states some reforms that he would approve as desirable ; and as these, even in his own opinion, are the least important, we will dispose of them first.

"One of the least important, though by no means the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 51 of this book.

least certain, of the positions to be defended," as he expresses it, against the critics of his *Unto This Last*, is the necessity of the organization of labour, with fixed wages. "Government and co-operation are in all things the laws of life; anarchy and competition the laws of death." Beginning from this general principle, he explains his proposal for a fixed rate of payment, which has been a stumbling-block to so many who would eagerly agree otherwise that *some* organization of labour is imperative. But Ruskin finds little difficulty in the fixed wage. "Perhaps one of the most curious facts in the history of human error is the denial by the common political economist of the possibility of thus regulating wages; while for all the important, and much of the unimportant labour on the earth, wages are already so regulated."<sup>1</sup> As for the general organization of labour—to which it really seems, occasionally, as if we were tending—Ruskin believes that "the sudden and extensive inequalities of demand which necessarily arise in the mercantile operations of an active nation constitute the only essential difficulty which has to be overcome." Of course, "in effecting any radical changes of this kind, doubtless there would be great inconvenience and loss incurred by all the originators of the movement. That which can be done with perfect convenience, and without loss, is not always the thing that most needs to be done, or which we are most imperatively required to do." But the difficulty remains, where are we to obtain the "captains of industry" that Carlyle so fervently longed for, and that Ruskin's whole system implies? "If we once can get a sufficient quantity of honesty in our captains, the organization of labour is easy, and will develop itself without quarrel or difficulty; but if

<sup>1</sup> *Unto This Last*, Essay 1.

we cannot get honesty in our captains, the organization of labour is for evermore impossible.”<sup>1</sup> Once again, the reform must begin from within.

### § 9. *Education and Government Workshops.*

Besides this—to my mind—fundamental reform of the organization of labour, Ruskin, in his preface to *Unto This Last*, details four other points.

First, there should be training schools for youth established, at Government cost and under Government discipline for the teaching of these three things : (a) the laws of health, (b) habits of gentleness and justice, and (c) the calling by which he is to live. Of these, the first and third points are now being taken up in elementary schools, whereat Ruskin would no doubt rejoice ; but how in this present age can habits of gentleness and justice be taught under the code ?

Then, secondly, comes the proposal for the establishment of Government manufactories and workshops, “for the production and sale of every necessary of life, and for the exercise of every useful art.” In these shops there should be only “authoritatively good and exemplary work done, and pure and true substance sold.” Here again Ruskin has anticipated by many years matters that are now being discussed as within the range of practical execution ; and the New Unionists rise up and bless him.

### § 10. *The Unemployed and Old-Age Pensions.*

Next comes the great problem of the unemployed. They, he suggests, should at once be received at the nearest Government school, and set to such work as it appeared,

<sup>1</sup> *Unto This Last*, Preface,

on trial, they were fit for, at a fixed rate of wages determinable every year. If ignorant they should be taught, and if weak duly tended; but with idlers he would have no mercy. "Being found objecting to work they should be set, under compulsion of the strictest nature, to the more painful and degrading forms of necessary toil, especially to that in mines and other places of danger, and the due wages of such work be retained—cost of compulsion first abstracted—to be at the workman's command, so soon as he has come to sounder mind respecting the laws of employment." Would that this scheme could be applied to the idlers of every rank in life.

Lastly—and this is interesting in view of the present discussion of national pensions and compulsory provision for old age—Ruskin would have comfort and home provided for the old and destitute; "which provision"—and this is the point—"when misfortune had been by the working of such a system sifted from guilt, would be honourable instead of disgraceful to the receiver;" for "it ought to be quite as natural and straightforward a matter for a labourer to take his pension from his parish, because he has deserved well of his parish, as for a man in higher rank to take his pension from his country, because he has deserved well of his country."

These four points form "the most of the political creed" at which Ruskin wishes his readers and hearers to arrive. Education, Government workshops, Work for the unemployed, Old-Age Pensions—not after all a very outrageous programme for to-day, but, when it was put forth exactly thirty years ago (1862), laughed at and denounced as revolutionary and ridiculous enough. Yet now every point is being eagerly discussed, and probably they will all soon be attempted.

§ 11. *The Housing of the Poor.*

Besides these definitely formulated articles of faith, we notice in Ruskin's works very clear and distinct demands for other reforms as well. The housing of the working-classes and the poor is one of them. Now on this subject it is interesting to notice his action in regard to the formation of the Alexandra Park, to the purchase of which he was asked to contribute, and would not. "I will resist to the utmost of my power," he said in *Fors Clavigera*, "all schemes founded on the vile modern notion that you (the working-classes) are to be crowded in kennels till you are nearly dead, that other people may make money by your work, and then to be taken out in squads by tramway and railway to be revived and refined by science and art. Your first business is to make your *homes* healthy and delightful; then keep your wives and children there, and let your return to *them* be your daily 'holy day' . . . . Once for all, I wish your *homes* to be comfortable and refined."

The first duty of the State and those who constitute it, is that of "letting in light where there is now darkness; especially mindful to give entrance to beams of light into poor rooms, back streets, and crowded alleys"; it is not the duty of the State to provide what magazine-writers are fond of calling "lungs for the people," but rather to make it possible for people to use their own lungs healthily in and about their own homes, instead of rendering the air of our cities so foul and poisonous that even to breathe it is a misery, and to live in it a disease. Few people, indeed, realize how utterly unhealthy and positively dangerous are the conditions of life in many large towns. In Liverpool, for instance, there are some streets so disgrace-

fully insanitary that the Liverpool Victoria Legal Friendly Society<sup>1</sup> will not allow any one living therein to be enrolled among its members. If there were two or three such proscribed streets it would be unfortunate, but, as things go now-a-days, not very surprising. But when we hear that the number is not two or three, nor two or three score, but one hundred and sixty-seven, we feel (or ought to feel) that such a state of things is a disgrace to anything venturing to call itself civilization. Well may Ruskin declare he would rather have pure and healthy homes for the poor than let them live in streets like these and be carted out occasionally to a "people's park" for a breath of fresh air.

§ 12. *The Land for the Nation.*

Now, as most people know who have studied the economics of rent, the question of the housing of the poor is connected not too remotely with the vast subject that underlies all others, the land. While our land system remains as it is, and public opinion allows the owner of land to extort a fancy rent merely because the land is needed for some useful purpose instead of being left idle and unproductive, there is little hope that we shall be able to afford to build houses for the poor with a little breathing-space round them. Nor, while the present system divorces the labourer from the land on which he toils, and refuses him any reasonable hope of ever acquiring any for his own use, is there much hope that the steady influx of the agricultural population into the slums of the towns will be lessened. Ruskin is, of course, dissatisfied with our present land and rent system. He would have us see more closely to it. "The right action of a State respecting its land is to secure it in various

<sup>1</sup> Circular of October 13th, 1886.

portions to those of its citizens who deserve to be trusted with it, according to their respective desires and proved capacities . . . for the most part leaving them free, but interfering in cases of gross mismanagement or abuse of power."

It would be a curious and interesting, if somewhat cruel, experiment to discover how many of our present landowners "deserve to be trusted" with land, or have "proved capacities" for the use of it. Any large town could in turn quickly furnish plenty of examples of owners guilty of "gross mismanagement" and "abuse of power," more especially in the poorer quarters. This, however, in passing. It is more to the point to quote Carlyle's strenuous declaration, that "properly speaking the Land belongs to these two: to the Almighty God, and to all his Children of Men that have ever worked well on it, or that shall ever work well on it. . . . A nation's life depends upon its Land."<sup>1</sup> It needs a Carlyle and a Ruskin to remind us of that; for indeed our national life, in so far as it depends upon land which is not national, but only private property, seems at present in no very satisfactory state. Yet Ruskin believes that the great old families of landowners, "which always ought to be and in some measure, however decadent, still truly are the noblest monumental architecture of the kingdom," would, even under a different land-system than the present, have their uses in showing how men may live a stately and beautiful and noble life; and indeed he would grant to them in perpetuity so much land "as may enable them to live thereon with all circumstance of state and outward nobleness; but their income must in no wise be derived from the rents of it."

<sup>1</sup> *Past and Present*, bk. iii. ch. viii.; *Unworking Aristocracy*.



§ 13. *The Guild of St. George.*

These being Ruskin's social theories, one may naturally look for a moment with curiosity at the practical shape to which he once attempted to reduce them when he founded the Guild of Saint George. He made the appeal for the formation of this Guild in *Fors Clavigera*, asking: "Will any give the tenth of what they have and of what they earn—not to emigrate with, but to stay in England with; and do what is in their hands and hearts to make her a happy England? . . . The object of such fund being to begin and gradually—no matter how slowly—to increase the buying and securing of land in England, which shall not be built upon but cultivated by Englishmen, with their own hands, and such help of force as they can find in wind and wave . . . If any help come to me, it is to be on the following conditions:—We will try to make some small piece of English ground beautiful, peaceful, and fruitful. We will have no steam-engines upon it, and no railroads. We will have no untended or unthought-of creatures on it; none wretched but the sick; none idle but the dead. We will have no liberty upon it; but instant obedience to known law and to appointed persons. No equality upon it; but recognition of every betterness that we can find, and reprobation of every worseness."

Such was the scheme,—to secure some spot where a simple and beautiful life might still be possible. It has not succeeded to any great extent, and has been vigorously denounced as Utopian, even by those who admired the writings and teachings of its founder. But it was Utopian only in the sense that it gave the present generation credit for a greater desire of simplicity and beauty in life than it

possesses ; and because such external and material schemes of reform must first be actuated by a corresponding reform of men's feelings and ideals.

#### § 14. *Ruskin's Later Life.*

We have only a few lines left in which to record the public incidents of Ruskin's life. We have seen him as the critic and exponent of Art, living in Venice, and sending forth from his Italian home the wondrous discourses on Art and Life that have been, in the truest sense, a revelation to those of his generation. In 1851 he arose and defended the band of young artists—Burne Jones, Noel Paton, Ford Madox Brown, Millais, Holman Hunt, and Rossetti and others—whom his teaching had inspired, men known to fame now as the Pre-Raphaelites and producers of the best art of this day. He has lectured in London, Manchester, and Edinburgh on Architecture and other branches of art, and in 1867 was appointed Rede lecturer at Cambridge and received an honorary degree. Then in 1870 he was called back from Venice to be Slade Professor of Art at his own University of Oxford, and held the post till 1884. The most noticeable work he issued during this period was *Aratra Pentelici*, a republication in 1872 of his Oxford lectures of two years before. He gave also the sum of £5,000 to form an endowment to pay a master of drawing in the Taylor galleries. His lectures at Oxford were among the great events of the term, and drew crowds of listeners, many curious, many disparaging, and a few appreciative. Many of his discourses had to be delivered twice, as it was impossible to accommodate his audiences. As a lecturer he was, when the present writer heard him in 1883, perhaps disappointing ; for he had not the doubtful

gift of oratory, and only occasionally allowed himself to flash into enthusiasm. Yet nearly all who heard him remained unsatisfied till they had procured and read both those lectures and most of his other works; and that is possibly as good a test as any of his effect upon his listeners. But he was compelled by the ill-health that so frequently befell him to resign his professorship and retire to his country home in the Lake country, Brantwood near Coniston, "a country cottage amplified into something like a mansion on the steep lake shore," opposite the rocky heights of the Coniston Fells.

### § 15. *Wealth and Life.*

We have left to the last the most important part of Ruskin's teaching—that which is more lasting and truer than his political creed or any mechanical reforms, the reform of our national ideal of wealth, and the reform first and foremost of our own selves. For as to wealth, have we not got an altogether false notion of it? "The essence of wealth is in its power over man, and the grandeur of wealth is to make man better and happier." Does our modern system do that? Do we understand at all what wealth means? or that it lies in men and men's souls and in our national life? "Perhaps it may even appear," says Ruskin, "that the persons themselves *are* the wealth . . . In fact, it may be discovered that the true veins of wealth are purple—and not in Rock but in Flesh—perhaps even that the final outcome and consummation of all wealth is in the producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy-hearted human creatures. Our modern wealth, I think, has rather a tendency the other way; most political economists appearing to consider multitudes of

human creatures not conducive to wealth, or at least conducive to it only by remaining in a dim-eyed and narrow-chested state of being. Nevertheless it is open, I repeat, to serious question, whether, among national manufactures, that of Souls of a good quality may not at last turn out a quite leadingly lucrative one?" That manufacture will bring us at the last true wealth; and, for other reforms, it depends mainly upon ourselves. "I beg you most solemnly," he says in *Fors Clavigera*, speaking to working-men, but not to them only, "to convince yourselves of the partly comfortable, partly formidable fact, that your prosperity is in your own hands. Only in a remote degree does it depend on external matters, and, least of all, on forms of Government." And again, in *Unto This Last* the same doctrine is taught unhesitatingly: "All effectual advancement towards the true felicity of the human race must be by individual, not public, effort. Certain general measures may aid, certain revised laws guide, such advancement; but the measure and law which first have to be determined are those of each man's home." And in thus reforming first of all ourselves we must set before us the three great principles of Admiration, Hope, and Love: "Admiration—the power of discerning and taking delight in what is beautiful in visible Form and lovely in human Character; and, necessarily, striving to produce what is beautiful in form and *become* what is lovely in character. Hope—the recognition, by true Foresight, of better things to be reached hereafter, whether by ourselves or by others; necessarily issuing in the straightforward and undisappointable effort to advance, according to our proper power, the gaining of them." Then, lastly, Love—"Love both of family and neighbour, faithful and satisfied."

And so may we obtain true wealth, wealth that is symbolized for all time by the crown of wild olive. "This, such as it is, you may win while yet you live; type of grey honour and sweet rest. Free-heartedness, and graciousness, and undisturbed rest, and requited love, and the sight of the peace of others, and the ministry to their pain; these and the blue sky above you, and the sweet waters and flowers of the earth beneath, and mysteries and presences innumerable of living things—may yet be here your riches, untormenting and divine, serviceable for the life that now is; nor, it may be, without promise of that which is to come." Such life is the only true wealth; for Life alone, properly lived, *is* wealth: "There is no wealth but life—life including all its powers of love, of joy, of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings, and that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personally and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others."

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*Social Reform: A Retrospect.*

Here we take leave of the last of our social reformers. We have seen men of various periods and of various views trying with what power of good was in them to alter for the better the lives of their fellows. And, in doing so, they have used or preached one of two methods, or, if wise, they have inculcated both—the internal and the external, the spiritual and the material, the moral and the mechanical. William Langland, poor and obscure, uttering roughly the

woes of his time, yet saw that lord and villein, peer and peasant, alike must do their duty each for himself ere the troubles of England would be lessened. John Ball, fierce and courageous, believed that an outward change of social conditions was enough, and died ere he or his fellows could see his mistake. Sir Thomas More thought of man placed in some ideal State, and forgot, perhaps, that be the State never so ideal and perfect it will, without a change of man's heart and mind, be ruined at the last. Wesley knew and felt that a man's social salvation, as well as his spiritual, depended on an internal and moral reformation. Wilberforce, though he believed that also, yet hoped to raise the negro by a mere change of his economic condition, and had he lived would have been the first to realize how utterly useless is an alteration of outward circumstances without a corresponding elevation of inward aims and ideals. In our own century the factory reformers have accentuated the outward elements of reform, Carlyle, Kingsley, and Ruskin the inward and spiritual. Both are necessary perhaps, yet of the two, it is the inward and spiritual alone that will bring us social salvation. In the social and industrial life, as well as in any other, a man must in very truth be born again before he can attain the heights of a new and nobler existence; and though the process of birth in the womb of Time may be slow and gradual, and perhaps even painful, there can be without it no proper entrance into the world of Life.

## NOTES ON AUTHORITIES.

THE best authorities to consult as to Carlyle's and Ruskin's views are naturally the works of the men themselves. Their chief works dealing directly with social questions are:—

By THOMAS CARLYLE :

*Chartism* : London, 1840.

*Signs of the Times* : an essay in the *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xlix., 1829.

*Corn Law Rhymes* : in *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lv., 1832.

*Past and Present* : London, 1843.

*Latter-Day Pamphlets* : London, 1850.

All now procurable in various editions from a shilling upwards.

By JOHN RUSKIN :

*The Political Economy of Art* : London, 1857.

*Unto This Last*, 1862.

*The Crown of Wild Olive*, 1866.

*Time and Tide*, 1867 ; *Fors Clavigera*, various numbers (1871-84), all procurable from George Allen, Orpington, Kent.

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For the facts about the life of Carlyle consult the monograph in Scott's "Great Writers" Series by Dr. Garnett, and J. A. Froude's history of the first forty years of Carlyle's life (London, 1882), and his History of Thomas Carlyle's life in London, 1834-81 (London, 1884). Also Froude's edition of Carlyle's *Reminiscences* (London, 1881).

For Ruskin, read his own *Præterita*, appearing in parts since 1885. There is also a work in preparation by his secretary, W. G. Collingwood, entitled, *John Ruskin, his Life and Work* (London : Methuen).

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